Duke University Libraries
D01813211H

my polio past

NOREEN LINDUSKA

DUKE
UNIVERSITY

WOMAN'S COLLEGE
LIBRARY

my polio past

my polio past

NOREEN
LINDUSKA

PELLEGRINI & CUDAHY CHICAGO

Copyright 1947 by *NOREEN LINDUSKA*, All rights reserved

Printed and bound by THE CUNEO PRESS, Chicago, U.S.A.

to ***mother,*** *in a red suit*

and ***father,***

with a steak sandwich

70994

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE: *On Pasts in General and One in Particular*

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	*When I Was a Butterfly*	5
II	*Here It Is for Me*	23
III	*Sister Kenny or So, Comes Into My Life*	43
IV	*Room for Two—With a View*	50
V	*We Are Never Alone*	69
VI	*Holidays—One! Two!! Three!!!*	96
VII	*A Quiet Evening at Home*	115
VIII	*I Meet Some Children and Get Away for a Night*	148
IX	*Intercalary*	166
X	*This "God Is My Co-Pilot" Business*	172
XI	*Last Times Tonight*	187

EPILOGUE: *Nothing But Sunshine*

70994

my polio past

PROLOGUE

On Picnics in General and One in Particular

My past is quite recently passed. It began not quite three years ago, and ended just yesterday.

Polio was not a very long past, and in the total stages of my life it may be likened to a day-long picnic. Yet when you stop to think about it, "picnic" is a very big word too; and picnics, like pasts, involve a number of persons.

A picnic means friends, laughter and happiness. It means things to do—getting there, getting the food prepared. It means being ready for a lot of activity like a baseball game, or a wild swim in the pretty, cool water. Sometimes unexpected things happen at a picnic too. Sometimes someone steps on a broken bottle, or gets stung by a bee. Sometimes it rains right in the middle of a picnic, and everyone crowds together shrieking gleefully or complaining bitterly. Whatever happens, though, "picnic" means that it happens to more than just one person. It means that there is someone there to laugh with you—or to cry.

Therefore, since *My Polio Past* includes all these unexpected things, it might even be called My Polio Picnic. That is what it was, from the beginning right to the last sad moment

when I said goodbye to all my friends and left the hospital. It was a big picnic, and I shall never forget it.

This is a simple story, so do not expect great things of it. It will not arouse any of your great passions, perhaps just a little compassion, that is all. It will not stand on your library shelf with M. France or the Russian Count, or even Miss Millay. In fact, I should like best to have you put it with the calendar which Johnny made for you as his first kindergarten project, or the composition which Mary Jane wrote on "Jason and the Golden Fleece."

CHAPTER I

When I Was a Butterfly

IT WAS SUMMERTIME again and the old swing made its appearance on the strong-armed maple tree. We were old friends—the swing, the maple tree, and I. The swing seat was whittled from a fine-grained heavy plank in the wood-shed, and only two seats ever had belonged to the life of the swing. The second one had been made only to accommodate a change in my *derriére* dimensions. This seat was worn smooth from summers of contact with my denims, and even the nude which Uncle Harry had carved in it the summer after his sophomore year at Michigan State was being smoothened into oblivion. The nude had odd angles, since Uncle Harry was a B.S. and not a B.A.

The swing was just a swing—with tow-rope handles that rubbed callouses on my palms in no time. It was just a swing, but it took turns being a trapeze, a street-car, or a magic beanstalk.

Behind me was the strawberry patch, and the tart fragrance of the hidden berries made my jaw-joints tingle. At the left was the big lilac tree, and just beyond that, the front porch. The square, gray limetsone at the foot of the porch was still overturned, and I could see repeatedly exactly how the black

and yellow snake had slithered through the hole in it one day; and I could feel again and again the same cold terror that I had felt the day I actually saw him. The stone had been overturned for years, but it still looked wrong-side-up.

Sometimes I would take the wooden seat off the swing, and knot the rope so that a big noose hung at the bottom. Then I would put the seat back on it, and by pulling myself into a daring standing position, I could see inside the lower branches of the big tree. It was wonderfully exclusive this way, with the branches resting on my head, and the leaves patting my face; and dreams from this position were serenely endless.

One day while I had my head in the tree, I saw a worm wiggle out of a cocoon and stretch its new wings. It was so awful and so intimate that I leaped off the swing and vomited in the lilac tree.

But the swing grew old and the big tree indifferent; so when a storm tore off its strong, straight arm, we three friends parted. For life is a number of bundles, all carefully wrapped and tied with time.

It was early June of 1943, and now that I had grown into a young woman, I had learned how important plans are to life. So I sat at my desk one Saturday morning and drew a little chart. After four uncertain years, my Pelleas had been graduated laudably from The Citadel and had gone straight into the Marine Corps. By mid-September he would be a real lieutenant and the wedding could take place around the twenty-fifth. While he was off to the wars, I would keep myself a busy, happy wife writing the radio scripts so impatiently waiting at the back of my mind.

One thing was certain, and that was that I could go on with nothing as it was now. I was preparing to enter a new era of my life, and all the old habits would have to be

replaced. Soon I would begin to wear my hair up all the time, and not just for formal occasions. I was growing up at last, and I could feel the newness of it stretching up from my high-heeled shoes to my cerebral cortex. I was passing from maidenhood into matronhood, and I liked it well.

The first move, I knew, would be the hardest, for I would have to quit my job. For almost three years I had sweated and wept and fired my furnaces to the bursting point in the mardi-gras advertising department of a tremendous Chicago mail-order house. I was ever so nostalgic in 1943, and how my heart hurt to leave the old place where I had shaken the ripest, rosiest fruits from the tree of my imagination to sell my heart with my words. I think I helped the firm with their sales-figures, too, for they used me in almost all their departments. My first copy job had been the little catalogue ads for stokers and plumbing equipment; and since I'm no Cluny Brown it took a few dozen lectures to teach me the difference between a pipe elbow and a pipe knee, or whatever they are. I remember how I had blushed when I heard the male and female libidinous names of the plumbing-hardware gadgets, and how delighted I was to be transferred to the ultra-feminine department of cook-stoves, rotary heaters, cast-iron floor lamps and fireplace fixtures. How I labored—how we labored, that is, to outsell every store in the country. Maggie and Bill and I took it upon ourselves to put the firm on the map, I guess, for we stayed at our desks until date-time on Saturday, and frequently, during the "Catalog Season," came back again at eight on Sunday morning.

But our labors bore fruit, for we were taken out of the clock-punching class and put on the "Junior Executive List." This brought little or no raise in salary but afforded me the prestige of having the usher at the desk downstairs say,

"Good Morning, Miss Linduska," as he checked the name from his list. Under the Junior Executive system we were allowed a little time to be late, but it seemed that the Junior Executives were the first ones down in the morning, and the last to leave at the end of the day.

And then it came—the glory of glories! The advertising manager called me into his office late one afternoon and began speaking to me with words which, even for an old adjective-hand like himself, were too beautiful to be real. I was a lovely little girl, he was telling me, and I had worked very hard, and my jittery hands and lined brow proved that I had been faithful, earnest and ever-loving. "And now," I thought, "you are going to fire me." But it wasn't that at all—the old boy seemed to be serious, and besides giving me my hundred-dollar bonus, he was going to send me to New York ON BUSINESS!

No graduation, no Nobel prize for literature—nothing can ever match the thrill of that day. Though I had loved New York time and again before, I never loved it like I did the first time I went there ON BUSINESS! And when I returned, instead of submitting the requested observation report, I sent the dear advertising manager a romantic short story of a new business woman and a wounded paratrooper looking at the stars from the top of the Empire State.

But I got the coveted fashion-seat of "Women's Shoes" anyway, and was so enthralled I suggested that I would be a better copy-writer if I were allowed to sell for one day a week at the busy State Street store and thus really see the shoes I wrote about. This request was granted, although thereafter I was regarded as a sort of inmate, especially after making a name for myself on State Street the first day I was there. I was to have a real "bank," so many dollars of real money in my drawer in the cash register, with a key

button to push every time I made a sale. I was so fascinated by the cash register that for half an hour before the store opened on Monday morning I rang up fabulous practice-sales and wrote a half-dozen or so practice checks. Tuesday morning I was called into the office of the Chief Investigator to explain how I had managed to short-change my register drawer in the amount of some $845.

The next Monday, the manager of the shoe section called me into her office and patiently explained the selling business. "This," she said, holding it in her left hand, "is a woman's shoe. This," she added, holding an object in her right hand, "is a shoehorn."

It always rained on Mondays, it seemed, and most of the customers came in to buy new shoes because their old ones leaked! Removing the soggy shoes in the middle of summer seemed to add little to my knowledge of copy-writing. But I loved the job anyway, especially when little grannies with bunions would tweek my cheeks saying I reminded them of their granddaughters, and then leave with two pairs of comfort shoes and a pair of house-slippers. Sometime, I would like to be a shoe salesman again.

But nothing in a large mail-order house ever stands still. So after a while my genius was sent to the Roofing and Building-Materials Department, where I not only wrote the little copy blocks of window dimensions and roofing-paper weights, but made up selling reports with mad illustrations, and added up sales figures on a machine that turned out to be as much fun as the cash-register on State Street. I thought of my boss as Orson Welles Kelly, a real Hollywood-kind of dynamo whom few appreciated except as a sort of good-time-Charley. But he was a real idea-man, I surmised, and one who knew how to get things done. He became my big brother, and even came to visit my parents and tell them not

to thwart my crazy ambitions about writing. He'd take me to lunch, and he'd discuss my future, and was forever introducing me to eligible young millionaires who inevitably turned out to be howling wolves.

But in a while I was in the book department, hurrying through my lists of science and technical books and Bibles to get to the novels and classics which took no thought to list, but which I insisted could be more aptly handled if I were allowed to read them first. How I loved the book department; and Thelma, the other girl in the office, and I were always being future-authors. We wrote poetry like—well, we wrote poetry. We made a complete outline for a book we were going to call "Murder Is Incidental" whose characters would include everything in the human sphere: an old mother, a wayward child, a nurse, a dope-fiend, a maniac, a priest—everything. It was going to be as philosophical as old Euripedes, and the murder and the murderer would be incidental to their effect on the lives of those who were suffered to live. We worked for weeks on the outline.

Then I decided to quit my job.

Like a woman with knee-length hair entering a barber shop, I took a deep breath and walked into the office of the advertising manager. Right up to the end my career at the company was just as it should be. His jaw dropped, and then with a kind of tremor in his voice, he hesitated for a moment while I suppose he shuffled through his mind for the speech called, "Personnel Psychology, 18-a, for the faithful employee fed up with routine and about to break traces."

The speech was lovely, and he delivered it so well that I couldn't remember what the content was. I was a little hypnotized by the melodious tenor of his voice and the taffy and brown tie which so beautifully matched his brown suit.

But suddenly he cleared his throat, and I blinked my

staring eyes and listened as he said: "—Even if you haven't heard any of what I have said, Noreen, I want you to remember this. You young people are more impetuous than ever; you are caught up in the mad whirlpool of these war days. You make quick decisions and never have the time to sit down and think things out. You scorn advice. Now I want to give you some words that I want you to remember always. They are: 'The older you get, the more you will appreciate the experience of others.' "

I didn't quite understand what those words had to do with me. Perhaps instead of all the nice things about me, he was remembering my wilder moments of fight when I had disputed experienced opinions on my word " 's-dreamlined" for a description of something new in shoe linings. Or maybe he meant the time I had cried all over his desk in humiliation when he expressed his opinion about a campaign I had taken more than a month to prepare. I had chosen Wallpaper as my subject and arranged the whole idea around something called Horoscope House. "Fantastic" was still a word I wouldn't take standing up. But his last words impressed me because I am so proud of words and the wonderful things which can be made out of them: babies and wars and almost everything begin with words. I jotted these down on the back of my last pay check stub and for a time I thought seriously of embroidering them in cross-stitch and of having the framed hanging on my bedroom wall, where I could see the words at the beginning of each new day:

THE OLDER YOU GETxxx
THE MORE YOU WILL APPRECIATExxxx
THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHERSxxxxx

But leaving, I was, and beginning my new life, I was, and immediately! I departed from the office a few evenings later with a round, globe bank labeled "Pennies for Baby"—

which was one of the items sold in the book department. It contained about a dozen new good-luck pennies. I was wearing the inevitable pink and white carnation farewell corsage; and my last boss, the book buyer, contributed several pertinent books to help me out in my new life, *Words As They Look* (a speller), *How to Land a Job and Keep It, Sex Talks to Girls,* and Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain.* I don't know how he happened to insert *Magic Mountain* in the group, unless he still had hope for the recovery of my reading from complete intellectual barbarism. Although I felt he had few enough expectations of Thelma and me, who kept insisting to him that one day we would be authors, and then wrote the sort of poetry we wrote. And now as I made my way through the dark corridors for the last time, I could remember no unpleasantness about the place except the time Mother came to visit me and got lost amongst the packing-boxes outside our office, and the time I sat on one of the boxes and cried because I had been given a secretary who refused to take dictation from me because we were the same age.

With a handbag full of receipts for last-minute purchases made with my employees' ten-percent-discount card—six boxes of Kleenex, a spun-rubber chair cushion, face-cream, dusting powder, a few gross of bobby pins, two lawn loafers, and a peach and white clothes hamper (which when unwrapped turned out to be black and white)—I collapsed on the back seat of our 1940 Oldsmobile, in which my father was waiting, and said, "Daddy, a new world lies before me!"

I knew just where I would begin, and if I forgot, I needed only to refer to my little blue-lined chart. My life was going to be well-handled this time—no wasting time, no back-seats for me. I was going to marry Pelleas, a rich soldier, be one of the highest paid script writers in Chicago, get an occasional

story in *Harper's Bazaar*, raise five sons, and at the age of eighty get my photograph in *Time* as the winner of the Nobel prize for literature for a novel called "Bricole."

So far, the chart was itemized only from July 17, 1943, to September 5, 1943. I would make Chart Number Two at the close of my honeymoon.

July 17 to August 2 would be vacation time. I would read three books and outline two radio-scripts. The subject of the first script was Jacques Armand, the son of Marie Antoinette, and the second, the intimate story of the Wright brothers.

But somehow letter-writing to Pelleas took up a great deal of time, and instead of reading three books by August 2, I was on page 543 of *Magic Mountain.* My trips to the Chicago Public Library for the script material were somehow side-tracked by visits to the trousseau shops, and in no time my bank account, which had barely recovered from my winter trip to the West Indies, vanished completely. By August 9, I had just one script lukewarmly completed. That week, my parents were in the country, and I couldn't seem to get out of bed before ten o'clock. That was the time that the mailman came with the letter from Pelleas. After an enormous breakfast beginning with fruit and going right through the breakfast-list of oatmeal, bacon and eggs, sometimes fried potatoes and ending with apple pie or gingerbread, I would go into the garden and comb the dog or clean my golf clubs or simonize the frame of my tennis racquet or saddle-soap my riding boots.

But when I awoke at eight o'clock on the morning of August 14, my conscience bit me, and I was certain that I had awakened for a reason of fate. I hurried through my breakfast and went directly to the Public Library with a fresh tablet of copy-paper and several well-sharpened pencils. Never was a man so evasive as Jacques Armand, and

though I combed the record cards from garret to cellar, the library had never heard of Jacques except in the same biography of his mother where I had met him. Completely exasperated with the recluse, I went into the children's room and found a light-weight, large-printed edition of biographies of famous women, written specially for children. The flies in the reading room were so tenacious that I finally exhausted my last piece of patience and took the book out on a vacation-time card so that I would not have to make another trip into the sultry, dusty Loop for several weeks.

When I returned home that afternoon, I found not only a note from my parents and the daily message from Pelleas, but an invitation to spend a week at the Lake Geneva home of a friend. Glancing at my copy-tablet which bore only the carefully printed name of Jacques, and dozens of doodles of flowers, gondolas, and single-lined aeroplanes, I decided that Marie's invitation was the perfect answer. I telephoned her that evening, and two days later, with my ration-books, golf-clubs, Elizabeth Arden make-up bag, a wardrobe case, and a big box containing a sponge cake, I boarded the Northwestern to Lake Geneva.

We had a perfect summer time. The boats and the cool swimming water, a double-feature every night, and "This is the Army" on Sunday! We played bridge, popped corn, drank cokes after the movies, and had a last cigarette as we looked out through the porch screens at the fat, yellow moon dancing in pieces on the lake water.

But even here the little chart would not work, for a special delivery letter from Pelleas cut my vacation two days short. He would be in Chicago, he said, and I left Lake Geneva in such a hurry that I forgot my golf-clubs in the corner of Marie's room.

We had our dinner on the patio at Jacques' restaurant and

afterwards went to the Panther Room to hear Woody Herman's tooting. Pelleas was going to the wars and was as full of excitement as a Christmas tree. He had always wanted to be a soldier—he wouldn't go on living if he couldn't be one, and I knew he meant it. As he told me over and over tales from the foreign legions his eyes would glow so, that I wondered if he wouldn't dream some night of cornering the enemy and awake in the morning to find his wife bayonetted to the wall. Now as he again talked about the wonderful soldiers who were fighting for America in this war and talked about them so gloriously, I wondered how he would regard them when he was on the same battlefield. I suggested that we dance, then, for I have a strange, uncontrollable assortment of complexes; and when everything is just lovely, and I should be most gay, I become most unhappy for thinking of the tomorrow when all the loveliness will be past. I am simply inconsolable at horse-races or relays of any kind, for worrying about the unhappiness of the contestant who comes in last. At gala night-club scenes in the movies, I always search out the background for extras who sit at the gay tables with unconscious envy painted on their pretty faces as they watch the star perform. At weddings I watch the least of the bridesmaids, and at graduation exercises, the little girl whose dress has the widest hand-made hem.

And then in a few days came the invitation to spend some time at the home of Pelleas' parents in Culver, Indiana, Pelleas' five fingers curled about my hand, and I looked at the bend in his shiny black shoes where his feet were dancing. "I'll be all right," I thought, "I can stay here where it's safe and clean and calm—but you—you'll be in the war. All ten fingers and all ten toes—now; war is like a fast song with sad words. . . ." But I didn't dare tell Pelleas, for he would have tried to convert me into a soldier of fortune too; and besides,

we seldom talked while we were dancing, for if words ever got his mind off the rhythm, his feet would come down like stone-crushers on his partner's toes.

And then in a few days came the invitation to spend some time at the home of Pelleas' parents in Culver, Indiana, where his father, the Colonel, was staying up nights with his very sick mount.

The following week I re-pressed my favorite travelling blouse, and boarded an early morning train from the LaSalle Street Station for Culver. The conductor on the Nickel Plate Road was an old, old man who had gold hash-marks on his left sleeve denoting forty-five years of service. I didn't smoke a single cigarette all the way down—I was afraid that after the nice conversation we had together, he would have been disappointed in me.

Pelleas met me at the train, and we drove slowly through the warm, sunny morning. There was a layer of faint yellow dust on the road signs, but the trees and grass were a bright, fresh green, so that it looked as if summer was still adolescent rather than senile. Yet, somehow, everything looked a little shimmery to me, and when I unpacked my bag, and discovered that I had forgotten the most important object, my bathing suit, I wondered what had happened to my mind.

When we walked through some of the old buildings, catching their last snoozes before the riots of the new fall term, I felt a little removed from all my surroundings, a little like a ghost revisiting the old homestead. When we stopped to examine a captured Japanese machine gun, nonchalantly sitting by itself in the middle of one of the deserted hallways, I felt a little giddy and unreal. Sometimes my conversation and my manners seemed a little incoherent, but nothing seemed to matter very much. As far as I was concerned, the world was just one big booby-trap. I told Pelleas and he looked at me

over the bump in his nose: "That," he said endearingly, "is because you are the craziest girl in the world!"

I found all the food as palatable as the Colonel's boots, and the only nourishment I could bear was hardboiled eggs and milk. When we went canoeing, I upset the canoe, and when we went sailing, I couldn't find the jib-sail rope, and I had all I could do to remember to duck when we were keeping in the wind.

That evening I saw the cat sitting on the back porch with the glassy-eyed remains of a fish in her mouth, and it made me very, very ill. After some sort of half-asleep night, I awoke in the early dawn and for one split second I couldn't move my legs. "POLIO!" I thought for one frozen moment, and then I laughed out loud—it was too ridiculous.

I got out of bed and tiptoed to the windows and looked out over the tree-tops at sleeping Culver. I wondered if anyone else had ever seen it so early in the morning from a tree-house. Then I went back to the book-shelves, and chose, standing on its own firm legs, holding its own amongst a stern row of military science books, a paper-covered edition of a "dream book." It was dog-eared and thumb-marked, and I giggled as I thought that Pelleas must have his whims too.

Somehow on the second day of my stay, I was no more mentally coordinate than I had been before. I couldn't depend on my words, and I was so removed from actualities that I almost seemed to lose my personality identification. I was vague and simple almost, and the only clear thought I could handle was that the loveliest thing in the world would be to curl up in my own bed at home and sleep and sleep and sleep. Pelleas thought I was playing a game with him, and tenderly put me on the train for Chicago late that afternoon. His farewell words said something about the wedding in a

week or so, and as the train pulled away I saw him standing there, scowling through the sunlight, ready to wave, but I was just too tired to hurry to the window.

Two days later a young man with whom I had collaborated on some short-stories invited me to have dinner with him. My voice on the telephone seemed strange to me, as if some little gremlins were playing double-dutch with my vocal cords. They made my voice jump up and down in totally unforeseen places, so that I sounded very much like a female Andy Devine. I was curious about this strange new feeling, and peered very carefully at myself in the vanity mirror. The red-bronze summer look was painted over with a kind of first-frost whiteness. But except for my strange, trembling voice, and a vague little headache somewhere in the back of my head, I didn't feel bad. I couldn't remember when I had been ill before, and I enjoyed the feeling a little like a child enjoys a bandage on his finger. By the time Jack came to call, I had already become a kind of earthly little angel. I smiled a very soft "Hello," that had the uncontrollable quiver in it which added superbly to the dramatic effect.

"Hey, you don't look so hot! You're pale!" Jack said, like a Cary-Grant-newspaperman.

"Uhn-hmmm," I laughed languidly, "I feel a little ill. Look! I'm wearing stockings!"

Games about being ill were fun once in a while. And most Saturday evenings with Jack were sufficiently repetitious to stand a little gilting. I seemed to have no brain-children to contribute to a story-deal tonight, and anyway the music in the restaurant we had chosen became a little too squeaky, and near midnight I had had my fill. I couldn't seem to find the energy to say very many words, and the little illness-game which had started out so slyly, seemed to have grown tremendously in the past hour or two. Now the little headache

which had given me the inspiration for the delicate damsel play had grown to an unlaughable proportion. I felt somehow as if I were being dragged about by the left ear, and as though I left a monotonous dirge of sound behind me that hurt when it reverberated back in my ear.

I couldn't wait until I was at home again, and Washington Boulevard seemed full of steep hills and sharp curves. As I closed my eyes, I felt us take off the ground and sail over the automobiles we were passing.

Jack was full of nice, sympathetic words. "I'll be all right," I growled, and we almost crashed into the bus on Central Avenue, because my startling voice sounded like an old coil spring scraped on the pavement behind us. We were both surprised, and after I heard myself speak, I felt much worse.

Crazily, the stinging pains aroused when my voice left my throat fiendishly urged me to talk more and more. The growl gave an uncanny fascination to ordinary words, and when I ran out of jibber, I began on my favorite poem, *The Highwayman,* and the "tlot-tlot" of his horse's hooves had a wonderfully weird, hollow ring.

I leaned on Jack as we ascended the scalloped front stairs, for my legs felt like hollow rubber hoses; and I silently counted each stair, as if the ultimate number were of great mathematical importance. I dismissed Jack with a quick growl, and made my way to my room with as much effort as if I were climbing the Rockies with a donkey on my back. I anchored down my floating bed with two extra blankets, and shivering like a cold puppy-dog, I climbed in.

That night I had a very odd dream. I was sitting in a tiny cubicle room wearing a suit of mail that I tried to keep suspended at a safe distance from me, since every time I'd relax, I would touch the cold metal which would send me into a fit of convulsive chills. The helmet was heavy cast metal that got

heavier and heavier and hotter and hotter. I don't know what I was doing in the cubicle—dreams can place us in the darndest predicaments—but there were many bowls around me, some filled with gold-fish and some with green peas. I must have dreamed this atrocity all night, for when I awoke on Sunday morning, my head swam with minute details as it is apt to do when you spend long hours in a cubicle sorting gold fish from green peas. I hopped off my floating bed, in a kind of dream-like gesture, and waltzed into the shower room. I waved silently to my father breakfasting alone.

I managed a rather hurried gargle, and made my way out of the room with the spinning floor tiles as quickly as possible.

"G'morning, Daddy," and Daddy dropped his toast and his jaw as the bed-spring voice vibrated on his eardrums.

"Ye gods!" he said, and sprang up quickly to help me back to bed.

"Wake me up at ten," I growled. "I've got to go to church —Ginny and Aurora want to see my new coral dress."

"Uhm hmm," he said, wisely nodding his head, and I drifted off on the sound, getting slightly sea-sick on the waves it sent through me.

I woke up again to the odor of chicken soup. "I'll get up in a minute," I thought. Mother tiptoed in often to see me, but I always thought that I would get up to talk to her the next time she came in.

When she came in at four o'clock and said, "No matter what you say, I'm going to call a doctor—" I bounced out of bed like any ordinary civilian.

I grunted, "Don't be silly, Mother, it's just the flu!"

Once awake, I realized how hungry I was. But being over-zealously independent in those days, I refused any assistance whatsoever, and made my own little lunch. The chicken soup

was delicious, but it had the strangest way of finding the pathway to my stomach. "Hmm," I thought, "the beginning of a bad sore throat." I tried to analyze the strange feeling: it was as though two marbles, which I had been rolling around in my mouth for diction-practice, had slipped into my throat and lay there spinning. The conjecture was hasty though, for the vague headache lingered dizzily on, making me feel like a not-very-blithe spirit.

That evening two of my friends came to visit me. We tried to play some cards, but my dizziness reached an unbearable state, and I had to return to bed. They left hurriedly and said they hoped they weren't taking the flu home with them. I fell into another kind of sleepy night full of dreams that at one moment made me feel like a flap-jack about to be turned and the next moment like an ice-cube being slipped into some hot tea.

When I awoke on Monday morning I was immediately disappointed about two things: one, the sun wasn't shining, and two, my throat still hurt! I was certain that by Monday I would be on the road back, and I felt more irritated than ill. The illness game had played itself out, and I was really ready to be well again.

My bed had turned into a rather reluctant, squirming octopus, and I weakly tore away from it. The grapefruit juice on the breakfast table looked delicious, and I was so unnaturally thirsty. But when I groggily tasted it, a very amazing thing happened, and I realized that in some way my nose channels had become confused with my throat—and of course the grapefruit juice had taken the wrong direction.

"Oh my gosh!" I growled, positively petrified. Hopping on one foot like the little fairy shoemaker, I rushed to my room, and flopped in utter distraction on the squirming bed.

"The doctor—oooh, call a doctor! oooh—!" I howled, but

Mother was already calling one number after another trying to reach one.

The minute the doctor came, I felt perfectly all right. If only there were some way of prolonging, or capturing in capsule form that last minute of robust health that we have just before we sit in the dentist's chair or just before the doctor pops the thermometer into our mouths.

While I warmed the thermometer under my tongue, the doctor pushed and pulled my arms and legs, while I resisted as directed with all the confidence of Atlas himself.

And then a very amazing thing happened. The doctor took out the thermometer, looked at it, took my left hand and gently holding it between his, said, "Don't be frightened, but I think it is poliomyelitis, bulbar type!"

Mother said, "Uhm-hm—."

I said, "Uhm hmm—."

Then I thought it over. "Poliomyelitis" was polio.

Polio was infantile paralysis.

"Goodness! Don't be silly," I said. "It's just the flu!"

CHAPTER II

Here It Is for Me

OF COURSE I had the flu. What was this ridiculous medical man talking about? I was Noreen Linduska. I was a grown woman. My trousseau was about ready, and my little blue chart had me scheduled for five sons. People like Noreen Linduska didn't get infantile paralysis. What was this "poliomyelitis" anyway? How could I have come down with something whose symptoms resembled infantile paralysis? Why, I hadn't even bothered to read the accounts of the supposed epidemic that year. There were daily stories in the newspapers and occasionally Mother boiled our drinking water when the conversation at a luncheon had sent all the mothers scurrying home in a fervid, but short-lived polio-panic. Once or twice I refused a green salad in a restaurant when someone would suggest that perhaps the polio-germs had not been properly washed from it. I had been bitten to the ears with mosquitoes at Culver, but certainly that wasn't the first time that a few thousand mosquitoes had found me a tempting morsel. I loved swimming that summer no less than ever before—but what was different in the waters of Lake Geneva or Lake Maxinkuckee from the hundreds of waters I had swum in elsewhere? I went to the movies—but so

had I always—so did hundreds of thousands of others who didn't get these funny symptoms. I lightly remembered the morning when I awoke in Culver and discovered that I couldn't move my legs. It seemed like a kind of coincidence, but that could be because my sub-conscious mind remembered the newspaper headlines or the prevalent pieces of conversation about it everywhere. Had Pelleas brought it from Quantico and deposited it on my mouth when he kissed me hello? Oh, this was preposterous! Polio! Of course not! I was robust, wide-awake, and vitaminized.

The doctor, ignoring Mother's and my apparent unconcern and disdain for his diagnosis, put his stethoscope back into his black bag and said to Mother, "Put a warm nightgown on her, and I'll telephone for an ambulance."

When Mother went to the attic for the flannel nightie, I reached for the dictionary in the book-case at the side of my bed. "Bulbar type polio," he had said. What did that mean? I found bulb and bulbiferous, but not bulbar. I would have to wait.

When Mother brought in the nightie, she didn't look a bit concerned, and goodness knows, I wasn't either. The only disconcerting bit of evidence was the impossible act of swallowing, which I didn't seem to be able to complete.

In a short while, the Cook County doctor and nurse arrived. It seemed that during the epidemic, all cases of infantile paralysis became the immediate property of the Cook County health authorities. He looked quickly at my throat, then gave me a tiny spoonful of water to swallow. When he watched the same water seep gently through my furious nose, he jumped up like a skyrocket, shouted for me to lie on my back, and propped the foot of my lovely French bed precariously upon two chairs which the nurse had hurriedly dragged up.

He reached into his pocket for a stack of Kleenex. Throwing them on my chest he said, "Don't swallow anything!" and was gone.

"I'd like some strong black coffee," I heard the nurse tell my father in the kitchen. "This is getting to be too much for me. This is the third case I've had this morning and it's only ten o'clock."

Two chauffeur-looking men came into my bedroom with a stretcher and insisted that they lift me onto it. I felt perfectly capable of doing so myself, for just a half hour before I had run hopping on one leg from my grapefruit juice at the breakfast table. But the nurse was firm in her refusal to let me try.

It was cold and raining a soft, penetrating drizzle outside. Someone had had the foresight to choose pink and green woolen blankets for the ambulance stretcher.

"This all seems so silly," I said, "when the only thing wrong with me is a little sore throat. I've had dozens just like this one."

Only for a moment, when the men were carrying me out of the front door to the ambulance, did I get a slight mental view of reality. I didn't like it, so I shut my eyes tightly. If any of the people who had stopped to watch our departure were going to be rude enough to ask a question, I didn't want to see their faces when they got an answer.

But somehow it was kind of exciting. Mother and the nurse rode in the ambulance with me, and my father followed in the Oldsmobile.

"When will I be back?" I asked the nurse, thinking she might tell me I was just going for an injection of some sort and might return home that afternoon or the next day.

"Twenty-one days is the quarantine period," she said, and I was shocked speechless. What were all these asinine things people were saying? Why, in twenty-one days I would be

Mrs. Pelleas and living in a little honeymoon cottage somewhere in the mountains of North Carolina.

But I kept being reminded of my inability to swallow "anything," and it left me a little dull and very confused as to what I could do in place of swallowing the things I had been swallowing since the day I was born. I concentrated on some wonderfully blue ink spots on the beige leather ceiling of the ambulance and became dreamily speculative as I pictured ways that ink spots had stuck to such a place. It was so unlike any gravity I had ever read about.

Then for a time Mother's conversation with the nurse seemed a little off in the distance, but I heard Mother answering a lot of questions—who our milkman was, and whom I had seen lately. Later, when my father told me that the ambulance siren sang at cross-sections all the long way to the hospital, and that we didn't stop for a thing, I was disappointed that I hadn't noticed.

"Isn't this exciting!" I took time out of my reverie long enough to rasp to the nurse. "When I get back from the hospital you will have to come to tea, and we'll have fun talking about how I almost had polio!"

And then we were in the basement of the hospital (which I later respectfully learned to call the "admitting room"). A handsome interne lifted a corner of the blanket to look at me.

"Hello," I said in my new bass voice.

"How old is the boy?" he asked my father.

"I'm a girl!" I boomed, utterly indignant.

The stretcher was rolled onto a drafty, squealing elevator which let us out on the fourth floor.

What little I had heard or read about polio in the newspapers seemed to come back to me now. The hospitals were obviously overcrowded, and on the way to my assigned room, I noticed strange metal-machines out in the hallways.

When we passed them I heard a kind of pulmonary sound. I didn't associate them with "iron lungs" until later.

I heard the hospital nurse tell my parents that I was the forty-fifth patient with poliomyelitis to be admitted to Michael Reese Hospital. She told them that immediate care of a new polio-victim was of the utmost importance if real recovery was to be expected, and she had commended my parents for being alert enough to call the doctor so soon. My father was a little annoyed at not being able to select a hospital for my care, but the nurse assured him that each patient was admitted to whatever hospital had room for him at the moment, and that the decision was entirely in the hands of the Cook County directors. The authorities were undoubtedly almost at their wits' end, for although there had been an overwhelming number of polio cases all summer, this week, the one after the Labor Day week, brought the heaviest toll of all. The nurse explained that the hospital staff itself was almost at a breaking point. The prolonged epidemic was an enormous strain, and the staff had been cut in half since a unit from the hospital had been sent to the war. The city was almost in a frantic state, yet daily more and more cases occurred.

The stretcher halted before a door marked "isolation" and my parents were instructed to remain outside. It seemed as though the hospital considered infantile paralysis contagious, for my parents were told they would not be able to see me in proximity for twenty-one days.

They were perfectly composed, however. Mother kissed me on one cheek and told me she would go down to the drug store and buy a tooth brush.

My father kissed the other cheek and said,

"Go on in there, Baby, and they'll fix you up."

So I smiled a nonchalant goodbye and was rolled into the rather utility-looking room. Inside it was one bed and a

green machine like those in the hallway. Suddenly I recognized the iron lung design. As I passed the mechanism, I saw that it was inhabited by a girl whose blonde hair lay flowing beautifully on the shelf where her head rested.

"Poor little thing," I remember thinking. "She has infantile paralysis."

My bed was propped up on wooden blocks at the foot and sloped, headward, like an empty teeter-totter. The chauffeurs left and three efficient looking nurses lifted me onto it. The swallowing became harrowing for a minute or two, so I closed my eyes and thought about absolutely nothing. In a short while a nurse entered with a steel pole, which she clamped to the head of my bed. She brought in a bottle of yellow, glue-like liquid, fastening it in an inverted position to the pole. The cap of the bottle was pierced by a rubber tube which led into the bottle and out again for several feet. A sort of needle-like attachment was inserted into the outer end of the hose. A white-clad doctor entered with a gauze wrapped board to which he strapped my arm. The doctor wiped the veins on the back of my hand with something smelling like alcohol, and with a concise quick jab inserted the hose-needle into the vein.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Serum," he said. "Now don't move until it's all gone."

I got a funny little thrill. This was exactly as if I had been seriously ill; I was getting a transfusion. And although transfusions had always sounded like some great physical tribulation, I found that the serum began to flow through the veins of my left arm in a cool, satisfying manner. I was so thirsty from not having had a drop of liquid since the chicken-soup the night before, that the quenching satisfaction of the liquid entering my arm must have put me to sleep. When I awoke again, it was quite dark outside, and it took a minute

or two before I was able to identify my surroundings.

I had never been in a hospital before, so I found much to catch my attention. The room was dreadfully dull in itself with beige walls and a deeper beige transfer-pattern breaking their height. There was one large curtainless window and a big glass ventilator jutting roomward from it. There was a little sink filled with chromium and rubber gadgets, and, in the corner, the droning respirator. Just then the door opened slightly, and I saw my parents peering in. The small light above the sink illuminated the room poorly, but I could see the eight feet to the doorway. My parents waved gayly and smiled with a twinkle. "We're all having a pretty exciting time," I thought.

Then a nurse came in and replaced the serum bottle with one of plain water-like liquid. It said "Glucose" on its label.

"May I have a drink of water?" I asked my nurse.

But she replied without a smile, "No, you may not"—and left me without a reason.

Suddenly I felt very much alone. I wanted a glass of water more than I had ever wanted anything in my life before. Then I remembered that I had been offered nothing to drink or to eat since I had come to the hospital that morning.

Later, when a nurse came in to see the girl in the iron lung, I did a very deceitful thing. "Please," I said, and I could see my quavering bass voice had startled her, "may I have a drink of water?"

"Of course, dear," she said, went to the tap, and filled a small glass with some cold, fresh water.

If she would only go away now, I thought, I would be able to drink this down without a pause. But she didn't leave, she gently helped me sit up. The water smelled so delicious that I filled my mouth with it. Then I don't remember what happened. I don't remember exactly, that is, for our minds

grow wonderful scar tissue over their wounds. The water just stayed somewhere in my throat, until it began to trickle in a thousand and one wrong directions. My larnyx helped make horrible noises, and I leaped out of bed, drowning. People came running from all directions, some doctors and two or three nurses. Someone put something in my nose, and I felt a hose being forced down my throat. But the breath wouldn't come in. I felt a little pump with suction begin to drain out the water. Then the tiniest piece of air came into my lungs, and I swallowed it like a dragon. Then a little more came, and a little more, and a little more. No one said a word, but one nurse stayed to wipe my face with a cool cloth and to smoothe the sheet over me. It was she who had refused me the drink of water in the first place.

"Now you know, dear," she said. "But don't be frightened, you will be all right again in no time at all."

The drowning had left me so exhausted that closing my eyes without a word, I imagined somewhere down the hallway I could hear the soft crying of a woman who sounded like my mother. It wasn't she though, I knew, for the last time she peeked in she had been smiling.

I awoke once more that night and found I had for a bedfellow a feeling I could not identify. I was so warm and everything hurt and didn't hurt at the same time. It was as though I were wrapped in a sort of pain that wasn't inside my skin, but hovering all about it. Still another nurse, whom I had not seen up to this time, came in and felt my head and my hands. She returned a short while later with a rather large oval pan filled with chipped ice and water and a flannel sheet. She wrung the sheet in the water and laid it gently against me. It was such a breath-taking relief that the cloud which surrounded me lifted for a little while after she had gone. And then I found that all my flippancy vanished. Like

a slow moon-set, I watched myself go from thought to thought—that even though I didn't have infantile paralysis, I might be seriously ill anyway—and that I might not live. It was a kind of surprise awareness, for death had all at once become rather understandable. It was a stage that one might easily pass into, a stage that followed a series of other stages, an event that came as a consequence of others. I was not frightened; I just felt strange and kind of bewildered and exasperated at the same time. "Oh, no," I thought, in a kind of Oh Gee exasperation.

Yes, death had become very simple, simple and understandable. It wasn't strange or far away, and there weren't any bugles or soft choral renditions with it. It was in the same room with me. Instead of finding it an ogre in a black robe, I found instead that it was a state of my own being, a presence in my own mind and body. I found myself able to take stock of what was running through my mind. How strangely similar those thoughts were to all those beautiful last thoughts I had read about people describing on their death beds. Had I lived enough? I wondered. Had I tried enough? But somehow, the rigid one-track of thought was too difficult, and my mind gracefully drifted off to pretty words and phrases. "Cobalt Blue" kept coming in, and I couldn't keep from saying it out loud. It led to lovely dreams of ribbons in gorgeous hues—lavender and gold satins, and rose-colored taffetas combined with aqua and silver. Then I reached the peak of dramatics, and I imagined that I could feel *time*. It was as if *time* were a lake, and I was in a canoe that had to be paddled with every breath in order to keep up with *time*.

The next morning I awoke, more thirsty and more humble than I had ever been in my life. I didn't feel ill that day, but I became conscious of a terrible kind of fright. I was afraid

that I would fall from the high teeter-totter bed onto the speckled marble floor. I was afraid to swallow, and I was afraid of the strong, energetic student-nurses who really looked like harmless little Baker's cocoa girls in their dull-blue uniforms with long white, starched aprons. The light above the sink even in the daytime bore a resemblance to its night-self, and it reminded me of escaping gas. I wanted someone to hold my hand, and I was too ashamed to ask for such a childish favor. I missed my heavy silver bracelet and my ring.

On one occasion, I even tried to cry, but that day I learned that patients of bulbar-type poliomyelitis haven't even the muscular control to cry. I missed my mother terribly, and her pretty, smiling face in the doorway looked so distant, it was torturous to see.

That evening I was to have my own nurse, and when I saw her, I was delighted. She was a tiny strawberry-blonde, an elderly woman with a Swedish accent so thick it could be smeared on *limpa.* When we needed the little pump in my throat again that night, she told me that it was called an "aspirator." She held my hand while she explained what I must do to get well—just lie quietly and take every order given to me. She was so sweet and nice with her kind little voice telling me not to be afraid, that I thought as soon as I got well I would write an article about her and send it to *The Reader's Digest.* I'd call it "The Kind Word," I decided.

But the night was so long, and although my body seemed to have given up sleeping, conversation seemed too difficult to bother with. By four in the morning, however, I had to scrape together enough strength to ask my nurse the two questions which were simply burning holes in my tongue. The first one was, "Will you please wash my hair now?" and

the second was, "When will I get well?' Both questions were skillfully evaded.

"Don't you worry," she assured me. "They won't keep you in this hospital any longer than you need to be kept. I suppose you'll be here for the rest of your twenty-one day isolation period, but by that time you'll be better than you were before the polio bug bit you."

"You're lucky," she said later. "When a bulbar-polio recovers, there's not a trace of damage left. It's the poor little kids with it in their arms and legs and backs that my heart bleeds for."

She explained to me that the reason the nurses put on gauze masks when they entered the rooms, and scrubbed their hands when they came and when they left, was to prevent the possibility of spreading the virus to the hallways where other patients and visitors might contact it. Food would be served me on paper dishes that could be thrown away, and the silver and linen were specially handled.

"Ye Gods, another polio!" drifted in over our doorway, and for some reason Little Swedey and I laughed.

She told me then that Michael Reese Hospital had cared for well over two hundred polio patients that summer, or about one-quarter of all the cases of infantile paralysis in the city of Chicago and its suburbs. She said that many of the newspapers used it as their authoritative source for pictures and portrayals of the treatment that was the closest thing in Chicago to the famous Sister Elizabeth Kenny treatment. She told me that the Sister Kenny treatment was famous but I knew no more about it than its name.

"Well, then," I said to Swedey, "if I had infantile paralysis, wouldn't they give me the Sister Kenny treatment, too?"

"No," she said. "It isn't for bulbar polios. That is because the muscles affected in a bulbar paralysis are those deep within the neck and head cavities and inaccessible by

surface treatment. Your paralysis has affected your speech, your swallowing, coughing, sneezing and some of the unnecessary processes like crying and wrinkling your nose. Some bulbars have a paralysis of the lungs too, and that is why we must take precautions and keep tanked oxygen on hand if you should need it for a little while."

"Tanked oxygen?" I asked. "Where do you keep it for me?"

"Why, right here," she said, rather surprised. Alongside my bed were two torpedo tanks of oxygen, which must have been there since I came, but which I hadn't noticed before.

"How do you think I got my polio?" I asked her.

"No one knows that, dear, but we assume that it enters the body through the nasal passages and goes on into the blood stream and spinal fluid."

"Then bulbar cases must be the most common," I surmised.

"No," she said, "they are the least common." Then she squeezed my hand and wouldn't let me talk any more.

Someone called to her from the door. She left the room and returned a second later with two baskets of beautiful flowers. In one basket were long-stemmed American beauties, and in the other gladioli in all hues of the rainbow. She just let me look at them for a minute or so, and then took them out into the hall again, so that they would not use up any of the oxygen in the air.

I was now aware of the fact that I would not be offered any food or anything to drink until I had learned to swallow again. Sometimes the astringent that I was given to rinse my parched mouth would be so tempting I had to use every ounce of self-control to keep from swallowing it. My only nourishment came from the glucose and dextrose bottles strapped to the pole above my bed, and injected into my veins almost twenty-four hours a day. The glucose and dextrose elements

were dissolved in quarts of distilled water and injected alternately. It took from two to three hours for one quart to be consumed, and since one quart of liquid is nothing to keep the body's processes going, I felt my avoirdupois melting away almost visibly.

The serum was administered just the one time. Its effects were questioned. Some doctors thought it might carry the polio answer, others said it had no effect one way or another. Some of the hospitals, I had heard, did not bother with it at all. Since the serum was quite scarce, some of the patients at Michael Reese received it, while others did not. It was usually reserved for the person on the "critical" list. It was a substance made from the plasma of former recovered polio patients and was the only medication given in the whole treatment. This surprised me immensely, since I had always assumed that there was a medicine for everything.

Towards evening of that first day, I turned my attention to the girl in the iron lung. A contingent of doctors had been in to see her during the afternoon. I got a glimpse of her while they were there; she was near my age. Only her head protruded from the iron lung in which she lay. This iron lung, or respirator as it was called in the hospital, was a beautiful piece of machinery—a big, steel, stream-lined box, long enough for the patient to lie in. The rounded lid lifted like that of a jewel-box, so I could see that on the inside there was a regular bed. The entire outside was a two-toned green enamel with fancy chromium-plated hardware. The whole effect closely resembled a 1941 Buick.

A long cord ran from the respirator to the wall plug, so I knew that the pulmonary sound came from the electrically run motor. But although the girl and I were alone in the room together most of the time, neither of us had the strength to talk to the other. Her nurse brought in flowers to look at, too.

However, I lay gritting my teeth while she was fed delicious dishes of creamed chicken, salads, and jello with whipped cream. Even that was bearable, but when her nurse would bring a tall, frosted glass of orange juice with crushed ice rustling inside, I wanted to beat the wall with my head. I was fascinated, though, to see how well she could eat while lying almost flat on her back. The respirator never stopped, and its drone eventually became the same as the sound coming from a person deeply and contentedly asleep.

Soon after my evening nurse arrived, several nurses and a doctor came to talk to the girl in the respirator. They removed the plug from the wall. While three of the nurses and the doctor rolled the respirator out of the room, another nurse operated a short crank-like handle at its side, and the regular drone resumed. The respirator was operated manually for the moving trip. My nurse told me that they were taking her to the children's annex of the hospital, where most of the respirator cases were being watched together. I hated to see her go. Even though she was silent company, her presence was nonetheless comforting.

Toward morning, the nurse dozed off and I made a mental note to be sure I would never be the only patient in a hospital room again. I, the most fervent isolationist for twenty-three years, had turned into a joiner overnight.

The next morning I was moved down the hall to another room. As the door opened, I joyously saw that I was to have a real, live roommate. Her name was Lenore, and she was just thirteen years old. She had been ill a week longer than I. As soon as she saw me she jumped into a gay conversation. She would be, I knew at once, a wonderful companion. Since I was still in the critical stage, Lenore would offer a marvelous diversion from myself. Her radio was tuned in to some real jitterbuggy music as she sang the vocals in a very musical

voice. I soon discovered she was also a bobby-sox fan, who knew exactly where to sigh and swoon in the Sinatra ballads.

I had only one objection to Lenore, and that was her ability to eat. In addition to the three daily hospital meals, which looked like fare for a goddess to me, Lenore's parents would bring added delectable morsels of chicken breast on toast or simmering hamburgers and bottles of iced coca-cola. With the eyes of a hungry little dog, I watched her consume them, and would try to pretend that they were going down my gullet. But any imagination eventually turns out to be a very poor substitute for the real thing.

On my fourth day without food or water, I was certain that self-control is absolutely of no use when it's dehydrated. My hospital nightie, that tied down the back in great lumpy knots, became almost unbearable. My swollen lips felt as if they did not belong to my face at all. The veins at the back of each of my hands and on the inside of my wrists and elbows were sore and swollen. By now the sight of a fresh bottle of glucose or dextrose almost sent me into hysteria. I begged the nurses and the busy internes to let me try just a tiny piece of chicken, or feel the juice of an icy orange on my tongue, but they shook their heads definitely and said, "Maybe tomorrow, but not today."

Around dinner time of that fourth day, a nice new interne whom I had not seen before came to look me over and to start a new bottle of liquid into my arm. As he looked around for a vein less used than the rest, I begged so piteously for something to eat or drink, that he looked at me more closely and asked if I would not be afraid to have a "Woggenstein." What kind of abracadabra a "Woggenstein" was, I had no idea. Perhaps I was to become an acephalous imbiber. But when the interne directed the nurse to order a cream egg-nog, I almost fainted with joy.

The new glucose bottle was set aside. In a few minutes the egg-nog arrived in another container. When I saw another thin rubber hose being inserted into the container, my heart fell a little. I thought that undoubtedly the wad of sterile cotton would be used to swab another vein. But in no time at all the gentle doctor and the sympathetic nurse had the Woggenstein and Miss Linduska smoothly working together. The thin rubber hose, almost unfeelingly inserted into my noble nose and down the passageway to the empty cavern, carried the egg-nog where it belonged. My joyous, neglected, deflated little stomach beat in exuberant pulsations. It was a strange, removed sort of meal, since the egg-nog felt so delicious, and yet I couldn't taste it at all.

"How much did you weigh when you arrived?" the interne asked.

"About 102 pounds," I said.

"Well, you weigh about 75 now," he guessed, lifting my bony arms and counting my picket-fence ribs, "so you'd better take all the egg-nogs you can get."

And so I lived for a long time—on the thick cream egg-nogs, and double-rich chocolate malteds. Life was indeed here to stay a little longer.

But suddenly, as though an arrow-borne match had been shot into a stack of dried leaves, I felt a tremor in my lower back, and the bonfire ignited. By the time a few hours had passed, the bonfire spread to my left leg and left arm and coursed my entire back to the base of my neck. It was like nothing I could have created by imagination. I had adjusted to everything so far, but this, unquestionably, was that extra straw.

My bed still sloped in the teeter-totter position— eighteen inches higher at the foot. As a consequence, I had contorted myself into a rigid position to keep my seventy-five pounds

lying the length of the bed and not tobogganing against the bed's headboard rails. But the bonfire's intensity destroyed all concentration, and every ten minutes or so I'd react to the bonfire with such haste that my head would meet the solid top-rail of the bed with a resounding whack. Lenore was becoming concerned about my sanity. She explained to me that the bonfire I described fit her pre-hospital polio pains precisely. But we decided that mine must be from some other cause, since I had already been identified as a typical bulbar, and therefore need not fear the menace elsewhere in my anatomy.

Finally I discovered that if I kept my back arched like the gateway to a city, I would not only be steeled for the fiery jabs, but also be able to prevent bumping my head on the top of the metal bed so frequently. And so the position remained, almost continuously, until the second evening.

Even the egg-nogs and malted milks were of little comfort now. Since I had perpetual beads of perspiration, I was more completely dehydrated than ever. On the second evening of the bonfire, I fell asleep for a few moments at a time, but each time I did, the same act occurred. "Woody Herman!" I'd scream—and I'd be awake again.

"Please," laughed a weary nurse, as she comforted me with another smuggled hot-water bottle, "—anybody but Woody Herman."

The next day a haggard polio interne, awake for almost two-weeks running, came to see me. He was the chief interne on the polio-beat, and had seen cases of every nature.

He squatted by my bed, and said, "Look, little girl, you were a bulbar. You are past the worst. You are unnerved and impatient because you're hungry. As soon as you can swallow a little, we'll give you something to eat and send you home. You're bothering other patients in the corridor

with your imaginations. You have no other pains. Your back hurts you because you're so skinny, and the bed isn't very soft. You've already had your polio, and you're getting better. Now quit talking about your back pains, willya?" And he snatched a rose from the vase beside my bed and was gone!

But by the next night the bonfire still had not subsided. I tried everything to convince myself that it wasn't there. I even read all the want ads in the evening's newspaper. But the bonfire didn't dissolve into an imaginary cloud no matter how hard I concentrated on something else. It was almost two o'clock in the morning, and I knew the light above my bed was disturbing Lenore. I folded the newspaper, and carefully placed it on my bedside table. I looked about the room at the flowers I was permitted to have now: big white chrysanthemums, more red roses, gladioli of all hues, and tall tropical torches. In the bedside were tottering stacks of cards and letters. Eighteen had arrived that day. Then I folded my arms across my chest. "Now just exactly what do people do," I wondered, "when they reach this point!"

I had not one milligram of endurance left; I could not bear one more jab from the bonfire, but the jab came with its periodic regularity as it had for three days and three nights. I had always thought that really ill people were never fully conscious, but I had never been more alert. I had not had a drink of water in almost eight days, and even if I had been able to cry, I knew that the tears would look like little kittens of dust.

But I honestly did not feel like crying. I was searching wildly for a solution, something that would help me. Since I was a bulbar, if the doctors had suspected that polio was moving in elsewhere, I would not have been permitted even so slight a sedative as an aspirin, for I had to keep my full

mind on the faculties which kept me alive from swallow to swallow.

What do they do, I wondered, those prisoners of war, the men who see the doctors approaching with their experimental knives; the Norwegian housewife who looks up from her kitchen table and sees a German soldier in the doorway. What do they do? Where is the advice for the horror-minute? Do you die eventually? Do you find your mind escaping and do you follow it to its end? What does that soldier do, who lies bleeding but conscious just waiting for help—just waiting.

I looked over at Lenore who lay quietly on her side. She had been so understanding, no questions, no short-tempers.

Then I turned my head the other way, and looked at the screen door put up for isolation purposes. In a flash I remembered exactly how my parents had looked when they stood there earlier that evening. Mother was wearing a red suit and a white silk blouse. Her hair was all curled and pretty, and she wore the big gold earrings which I had bought for her with my first story money. She was smiling as she relayed all the gossip I had missed by not being at home. Behind her stood Father with a big bottle of ginger-ale under his arm.

"How about a steak sandwich, Baby?" he grinned. "I don't think they feed you as well as Mother does."

"Dammit!" I thought. "If they can stand outside the door and smile into the room, I can lie in the room, and smile out to the door!"

So I just clenched my fists, that's all, and closed my eyes as hard as they would close. Very slowly I began to repeat the twenty-third Psalm, which Lenore's father had read to us from the doorway that afternoon.

The bonfire roared; it punched and it tore, but I would not

move. I was as hard and as immovable as the oldest tree in the petrified forest.

I don't know how many twenty-third Psalms equal an aspirin, but the morning-nurse was already bustling around our room when I awoke. She had brought a heat cradle for the pain in my back. My temperature, she told me as she looked at the thermometer, was at last slipping back to normal. That morning I was permitted to try swallowing a small spoonful of grape-jello for breakfast. I settled back on my teeter-totter, far from comfortable, but more rested than I had been in a long time, and began to think that what the interne had told me might be true after all. I had had my polio, and in a few days I would be well enough to go home. Pelleas would be wondering why his letters had not been answered. My troubles were over, so I turned my full attention to Lenore.

CHAPTER III

Sister Kenny or So, Comes Into My Life

NOW THAT I was "one of them," I combed all the newspapers for every account of polio that was printed. The total cases in the city of Chicago alone numbered over twelve hundred victims. One hundred fifty-two patients had died. There had been a great deal written about Sister Kenny, who I learned through the newspapers was an Australian nurse responsible for a new, and according to the reports, spectacular treatment.

"Lenore," I said, "do they give the Sister Kenny treatment here?"

"Well I guess so," she answered, "although the hospital does not call it the true Kenny treatment. Anyway, it's the hot-pack and physio-therapy method."

"What's that?" I asked, wondering if hot packs would be a kind of mentholated plaster like the one used for chest-colds and if physio-therapy would be a kind of physical education in a swimming pool.

"You'll see," Lenore said. "I get my treatments sometime this morning."

Although I had heard an odd squeaking noise outside the door on frequent occasions, I didn't know until now that it

was made by an old washing machine which conveyed the hot-packs from the sterile steamer to the polio's room. The screen door opened and at last I saw it. It was a washing machine, but one of very questionable extraction. Its pathetic brown square boxed body was nicked almost out of shape, and it squeaked and it rumbled and swayed while its giraffe-necked wringer made noises like the grinding of human teeth. The nurses called her Tillie, and it was plain to see that Tillie belonged in a hospital, for her days were numbered.

Three nurses entered with the washing machine. As they rolled it over to Lenore's bedside one of the nurses plugged the cord into the wall socket and a series of new rackets and rumbles started up. When she lifted Lenore's cover, thick clouds of steam rolled out, and Lenore began to squeal. I was simply fascinated and I asked the nurses please to explain what they were doing.

"These are Kenny Packs," one nurse said. "They're made from heavy woolen blankets and boiled in steam."

While Lenore was lying on her side, the nurse at Tillie's side lifted a mesh bag tied with a cord and labelled with Lenore's name. The steam filled the room; the nurses looked very warm. From within the mesh bag the nurse lifted a large triangle of olive-drab woolen cloth with a pair of strong forceps. She wrung the triangle through Tillie's wringer twice, and with her forceps, handed it to the nurse at Lenore's bedside, who took it and dropped it quickly onto Lenore's leg. She squealed a little more vehemently, and a slight tremor ran through my back as I saw that the pack was actually too hot for the nurses to handle very long. Yet it was placed on Lenore's leg and not removed. Instead, still steaming, it was carefully wrapped around the leg, then wrapped again with a piece of rubberized cloth cut into the same triangular shape and wrapped for a third time with another triangle of dry

woolly blanket which was then securely pinned with several large safety pins.

While one nurse was "wrapping" Lenore's leg, the other wrapped her arm by the same procedure. The three nurses worked easily and methodically, the one wringing the wet cloths, and the other two doing the "packing." The piece for Lenore's arm was a rectangle cut to fit from elbow to wrist, the one for her shoulder a smaller triangle, the one for her back a larger rectangle, and the one for the back of her neck another small rectangle. When all the pieces were applied, she was finished-off with two strips of double-folded muslin about eighteen inches wide and several feet long. One of these muslin pieces was wrapped around her back and stomach and pinned together on her hips. The other went around her upper back and chest. They were used to hold the hot-packs in place securely. She resembled an undressed, muslin-bodied doll. The nurse told me that used blanket-woolens made up the wet-packs, since new wool, especially that of the heavy camel-hair variety which was cut for the outer dry wrapping, were too irritating to the skin, particularly on those hot days of September.

The nurses left, and I was surprised to find that Lenore would remain in her hot-packs for about an hour and a half.

"You see," Lenore told me, "we each have two complete sets of hot-packs, so that while one is being used, the other is in the steam sterilizer getting ready for another application."

"How many of these applications do you get each day?" I asked her. "About six," she said.

"How do they feel?" I asked.

"Kind of good, once they're on," she said. "They make you relax just perfectly, and all the throbbing and twitching in my polio-ed muscles seems to go to sleep."

And I could almost feel the effect, by just having seen it.

Now that I saw Lenore lying there peacefully, I envied her the hot-packs. The electric heat cradle over the base of my back (which was still tensed into an arch) seemed like a poor competitor to the heat which I knew must be penetrating Lenore from surface to surface.

In about an hour, a white-uniformed young woman came in. She had black wavy hair, cropped close to her head and she walked with a delightful bounce. She slipped into the sterile white gown behind the door, and tied her smiling face into one of the gauze masks that everyone entering our room still was forced to wear. She chirped a bright "hello" at me and went directly to Lenore's bedside.

"Hello, Lindy," Lenore said, very happy to see her. "This is my new roommate, Noreen. Noreen, this is my physio-therapist."

Now I saw that physio-therapy was a person and not a thing like a swimming pool.

The physio-therapist drew the curtain between Lenore's and my bed. Then I heard her chatting about the pretty sailboat she could see lilting about on Lake Michigan from our room window. She had folded the packs which she removed from Lenore into a wet and dry pile and I heard her voice drop to a low, almost indiscernible pitch as she said,

"Here, Lenore, think here!" and then absolute silence except for a few groans or "That's as far it it will go."

How I wished that I could see what they were doing behind the drawn curtain, but my first question was quickly hushed. I must be extremely quiet, I was firmly instructed by the charming young physio-therapist.

She drew back the curtain between our beds and waved a gay goodbye. After she was gone I asked Lenore what she had done.

"Don't talk to me," said Lenore. "That's the only exercise

I get all day, and believe me, it certainly wears me out. She just moves my paralyzed muscles, that's all, and tries to teach me how to move them myself."

Soon afterwards, the hot-pack nurses came in again with Tillie and re-packed squealing Lenore.

"Now why doesn't someone pay some attention to me," I worried, but all the attention I got was a little cherry jello for lunch and more egg-nog a la special delivery in afternoon.

Lenore had five sets of hot-packs that day, and by evening, I felt I was quite a specialist on the Kenny treatment.

The bonfire had gone out, but it had left a kind of smoldering after-effect which was so constant that I felt my legs and my shoulder engaging in repetitious barrages of little twitches to rid themselves of it.

My dreadful fear of my illness had seemed to pass with the nights of drowning, but I was still sure that there had been a mis-diagnosis somewhere down the line, and that I had had a case of diphtheria or even a streptococcic sore thoat, and not infantile paralysis. There was no thorn of concern about the bonfire. I believed entirely that the interne knew a recovering patient when he saw one.

However, that night, when my ever-present thirst kept me from falling asleep, I tried to turn on my side as naturally as ever before. But though I did it unconsciously, I blinked to discover that I had not changed my position. Frequently in the spasms of horror, I was almost convinced that I had lately lost my mind, that the present impossibilities were only dreams of what must be happening to someone else. Now I knew I would have to jar myself into complete consciousness. So I tried to turn again, but as before, nothing happened. Then my heart began to pound and I felt a hot perspiration on my forehead. I had never been so completely frightened in all my life. I flung my right arm across my

body and grabbed at the edge of the mattress with such force that three fingernails bent back. Then at once the blankets became so heavy that I could not bear them. I tried to kick them off, but though I thought I tried, the blankets did not move. Certainly this was a dream in which I was reaching for something, stretching and stretching for it, but could not quite touch. I propped myself up on my left elbow to think more clearly, but the arm collapsed. By now I was trembling so hard that the bed shook. I felt a wild heart beating in my throat. I called hoarsely for a nurse, but when she came running, I pretended that I had called for her in my sleep.

After she left, I just lay there taking stock of myself. I tried to sit up to get a better look at my toes, but my back was as elastic as a piece of adhesive plaster, and I found that I could not sit up. I tried to raise my right arm and found that it could be lifted no higher than a few inches from the bed. The left arm didn't budge. My right leg I discovered could be extended sideways, but the left one just lay.

After the first horror of anything, an old family chromosome somewhere usually helps me into a humorous frame of mind. "Well, well," I smiled to myself, "maybe you've been too vain about your pretty legs, Miss Linduska. Maybe you'll be grounded for awhile."

But after awhile the horror left me completely, and I went back to the words of the interne, who told me that all my troubles had begun from starvation. I decided that tomorrow, while Sinatra and Lenore sang, I would try very hard to finish my shimmering mold of jello. (That I did, for whatever else may be said about Sinatra, I found him the perfect accompaniment to swallowing.)

The next morning after Lenore's first set of hot-packs, the physio-therapist came into our room again. Her effervescent mood of the day before had not changed, but this time after

she drew the curtains between our beds, she came to stand by my side. I felt jovial myself, for after all I had eaten a whole dish of jello for breakfast, and was well enough to make my peculiar voice understood to the telephone operator so that I could call my parents and tell them about it.

There was no doubt in my mind but that the physio-therapist had been sent to my bedside to conduct a little final-checking-up on me, and that at the end of the week, I would be able to go home.

All this flashed in an orderly fashion through my mind between the time the physio-therapist said "Hello" and "Can you stand?"

"Can I stand?" I laughed. "Why, of course!"

She helped me to a sitting position, for I couldn't seem to make it myself. The room spun dizzily around in a patterned figure-eight fashion. I panted and puffed, and then silently blamed taking all this time on just being so darned hungry. I pulled all my resources together, and gingerly hopped off the bed in an old-memory action, and collapsed into her arms. My legs and ankles went off in opposite directions as if I were on ice-skates for the first time, and I couldn't remember where my knees were. My foundation was as firm as a couple of licorice whips.

"My goodness," I said, looking up at her, very bewildered. As she silently helped me back into the bed, I decided that I wasn't in such a very big hurry to go home after all.

CHAPTER IV

Room for Two—With a View

THAT evening I said to Lenore: "When I was a freshman in college, I could leap higher than anyone in my dancing class!"

"That's nothing," she said, "my first pair of high heels are practically brand new."

But after we had had our good-night tooth-brushes that evening, and when the lights were turned off, I decided that Pelleas would not know. I was sure that he would make a better soldier in the foreign legion than a husband, anyway.

The first change in the room-service the next morning involved a new kind of bed for myself. Heretofore, I had not been aware of the difference in Lenore's bed from my own, but now I discovered that she had been occupying a "Kenny bed" all the while.

Any change from my sloping teeter-totter would have merited a loud whoop from myself, but when I saw the intricacies of my new bed-stead, I was highly flattered.

The six-inch wooden blocks which held my bed up at the foot were evenly distributed to each of the bed's four legs. The bed-spring was removed, and in its place a wooden, plank-platform—built to the exact size of the bed—was inserted.

The soft mattress was replaced by a hard, horse-hair one, and in place of white sheets the bed was made-up with wooly, camel-hair blankets—both under-sheet and top-sheet. At the foot of the bed a rectangular wooden board was inserted between the mattress and the iron-rails and held away from the mattress by two more of the square wooden blocks. Each of the strange accessories which made up this new kind of bed had a specific purpose. The blocks under the legs would raise the bed to a height on which the hot-pack nurses could more easily work. The wooden platform underneath the mattress was to keep the polio victim lying much straighter than would be possible on a bouncy spring. (I discovered later that it also played an important part in keeping me mighty tender in bony spots.) The blanket sheets were used to ward-off any possibility of chilling, and to retain the heat in the hot-packs. This was the first indication I had of being added to the list of "hot-packed" polios. The rectangular board which fit the width of the bed, and was about 24-inches tall, had an important purpose that had proved in many cases to prevent the following crippling from taking place. I was instructed to keep the bottoms of my feet flat against the board while lying on my back, and to drop my feet between the mattress and the footboard when I was lying on my stomach. The pressing of my feet against the footboard was to stimulate my "standing reflex." The top blanket was hung over the top of the footboard so that its weight would not rest on my weak little toes, that bent like feathers and would not go back where they belonged unless pushed there. A smooth linen-sheet was folded across the top of the mattress so that the woolen blankets would not chafe my face.

With these complete explanations, I was lifted off the hospital cart where I waited while the bed was being prepared, and was firmly instructed not to lie on either of my sides.

Since from the beginning to the end of my hospital stay I had to know the scientific reason for everything, the nurse told me that the muscles on the side I was not lying on would be laxly stretched beyond their normal length. Polio muscles first lose their elasticity, and when I stood, I might find that one hip had been pulled considerably higher and that one leg would reach considerably longer than the other. I did not lie on my side, but I found in no time that the wooden blocks, which kept the footboard at a distance from the mattress, made excellent toe-stubbers. I realized, though, that the intent of this polio-bed was to keep me as straight as possible, and in this horizontal position, I closely resembled myself in the vertical, standing one.

For breakfast I at last was given a tray with the paper dishes still used in our room, for we were not yet past our quarantine period. There was a thick farina without sugar or cream to impede the swallowing, and a pretty berry-dish of strained apricots. It took me almost an hour to finish the apricots, and just as I started on the farina, the packers came in with Tillie. "For you!" they grinned, twisting imaginary moustaches.

"Oh, wonderful!" I beamed. And they all raised their collective eyebrows.

"What?" said the head nurse of the floor, who had come to watch me tortured. "You don't mean you want those things? Don't let me discourage you, but I see by the papers that the thermometer will hit around ninety today!"

"You're a good actress," a packer said, "but you aren't fooling us for a minute. We feel sorry for you kids—especially in this kind of weather."

Lenore laughed. "Just wait," she said. "You've been asking too many questions c-o-m-r-a-d-e! Now you'll see!"

I didn't try to convince them, but happy I was to try something that might soothe the embers of the bonfire. The arch

into which I had contorted my back was by now an old habit which I couldn't break. Relaxing it into a normal position was completely impossible, and standing up I would have looked like a ballet dancer in a still snapshot of the Swan Dance. But from the first I saw of the steaming wet pack, I knew it was the medicine I needed.

"You're special," the packer at my bedside said. "We have 'quick packs' for you already."

"Quick packs?" I said. "What are they?"

"Roll over on your stomach and we'll show you." But when I couldn't quite make the roll, she tenderly helped me over. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw her lift a steaming rectangle from the mesh bag which now must have my own name on it. It slipped from the forceps and she grabbed for it with her left hand, and dropped it with a howl back into Tillie.

"See what we mean!" she laughed, but I was too anxious for it to waste time on a shudder. She picked it out again, wrung it just once through the wringer and handed it to the rubber-gloved nurse at my side. The nurse held it by its top corners and little by little let it fall to completely cover my back. Small spires of steam rose from it. Then she covered it with a layer of muslin and one of dry blanket; another rectangular hot, wet blanket was placed on the backs of my legs completely covering them, and then the woolen blanket was pulled over me.

"Ooh," I said, and then I couldn't say anything more.

"How is it?" they all laughed at intervals, for now the packers were treating Lenore. But I couldn't tell them. My arched back and throbbing shoulder and stiff legs that had been host to the bonfires for so long were as helpless as a piece of paraffin over a hot flame. If the hot packs did not do another thing for me, I knew that under them I would at least be able to relax in complete peacefulness.

Quick packs, they told me, were the hottest variety of the hot packs, and used in cases of severe pain and paralysis. They covered just one at a time (usually the dorsal); I imagined that the back of one's legs could endure much more heat. Then too, since polio was a spinal affliction, the heat on the spine itself might be the important thing. Quick packs were evidently an attempt at "quick relaxation," for the longer I retained my arched back position and my stiff-legged lying, the greater the chance there was for the polio virus to do its complete damage. I learned that relaxation is the great goal in polio, and that was why Lenore's joints had been left free for movement even when her upper and lower arm was completely packed. Relaxation encourages movement, and movement discourages deformity—for deformity, after all, occurs when a portion of the body, coursed by the intense pain of the virus at work, distorts its normal position, just as I had created the arch in my back to steel myself against the bonfire.

Paralysis was obviously a lot of things I had not known. First, it did not render me feelingless or numb, but instead had made me almost hypersensitively aware of its extreme pain. It hurt so, and for such a long time. And yet I would have to attempt to move in spite of the pain, if I did not desire the muscle to forget its purpose entirely and almost dissolve from lack of use. . . .

When Lenore was completely packed, the nurses returned to my bedside and applied five more of the quick-packs within short periods of each other. As soon as one quick-pack would stop steaming, another would be applied to replace it. After the quick packs, the complete hot-pack was given me, and I too was wrapped up like a muslin dolly and covered with the blanket.

I have found that it is difficult to convince anyone that I felt no displeasure in the hot packs at all. Truthfully, the effect

was so thrilling that I telephoned to Mother and told her to plan her visit a little earlier in the afternoon, so that she could watch the packing take place. If she felt sorry for me, she exercised the same nobility which kept her smiling all through every hospital visit, never once exhibiting an overwhelming motherly sympathy. Her composure was perfect, and not once did the tears well up in her eyes to give away the secret to me that I was much more seriously ill than I imagined. She laughed and said that I looked like a horse-whipped little Eva, for several bright red welts had risen on my back where the steam from the quick-packs had nestled too close. The packers, though, told me in the beginning that the hotter the quick-packs were, the better penetrating job they could do, so hot I let them be!

With my faith in the physio-therapist and the soothing first-effects of the hot-pack treatment, I had no dark, overhanging fears of polio, although I still didn't think of myself as having it. Infantile paralysis sounded to me like the name of a consequence, and what was happening to me was immediate! Without being the least morbid, I found that I had an extreme interest in everything that was taking place. I tried to think about my throat as little as possible, since it was a stark reality. Eating breakfast took me almost the two and a half hours until lunch, and eating lunch took up most of the afternoon. In between spoonsful there were the hot-packs. My menu increased, and for luncheon I had mashed potatoes without butter or gravy, and a small square of cream cheese. For dinner there was strained spinach and carrots and sometimes more farina. The drowning episodes became fewer and farther between, although the sight of a glass of water sent my heart pounding in fearful expectations.

The day after my first series of hot-packs, the physio-therapist returned to my bedside.

"How do you like them?" she asked, and I think she was the only one who believed me when I told her that I did. "And now for your exercises," she said, removing the hot-packs and placing them in neat wet and dry stacks.

From the beginning of my contact with the hot packs, I was of the opinion that they were the most important part of the Sister Kenny conception treatment. But now that I was exposed to the exercises, I knew that they would command all the efforts I could muster up. The exercises were really a muscle re-education process. A beginning to teach me the proper movements of my muscles, which my failure to sit-up or to turn over had showed me I lost. Re-education—how simple it sounds, but what a job it was!

Since the muscle was actually affected by the polio virus, the packers and the physio-therapist did not handle it, but moved it through its normal arc of motion by holding only the joints. With superlative gentleness, the therapist took hold of my left hand at the wrist. Stroking my arm lightly with her index finger, she indicated the muscle on the inside of my arm which raised it up, and again the one on the outside of my arm which let it down. I had never imagined that it took two different muscles pulling from opposite sides of my arm-bone to flag down a taxi. "Think here," she said, and she stroked the inside muscle and raised my arm slowly upward from the elbow. She instructed me to close my eyes and relax completely, in order that I might exert all of my efforts to complete concentration. The idea was to concentrate so completely that I could feel the movement of the muscle that was in reality paralyzed. Of course, I felt nothing for the muscle itself was stiff, and when she raised my arm from its wrist, something twitched in my arm and pulled so painfully that all plans of concentration were lost in the slow pull of terrible, shooting pain. Sister Kenny's conception, the physio-therapist

explained to me, was that while the muscle was in a stage called "spasm," the polio virus was actively at work in the muscle. "Spasm" in my case, she explained, was the bonfire days. The muscles at that time twitched and ached and perhaps even some chemical change had taken place in them. During this spasm period, the muscles which were affected actually shortened in their normal length.

"In the case of this arm," she explained, "you have difficulty in straightening it out because this muscle on the inside of your arm has shortened, and stretched this one on the back of your arm beyond its normal length. It's like placing a rubber-band over a match. When one side of the band is shortened, the other is stretched."

"It was formerly believed that in the paralysis of an arm, both of the muscles were effected during spasm, and that is why patients were put into heavy plaster casts to keep the limb in as normal a position as possible. But further experiments proved that shortening took place within the cast anyway." It was quite an enlightening bit of information, and I was satisfied that I knew what was happening inside of these funny muscles of mine that had been strong enough for swimming and tennis, and now couldn't quite manage a kleenex.

But I could see that the physio-therapist meant business, and it wasn't very often during a treatment that she took the time to explain all the delicate intricacies of my illness, and the treatment which I was receiving for it. She did tell me, however, that I had a rather rare combination of the bulbar-type poliomyelitis and the other kind which affects the limbs. There was no question in my mind that the reason the infection spread from my throat was that I had been so weakened from starvation, and consequently thoroughly unable to resist further efforts of the virus. No one in the hospital knew why or how the two varieties had settled in me. The discovery was

more of a surprise to the interne, whose optimistic words I remembered so often, than to anyone. Perhaps if the discovery had been made sooner, the hotpacks would have been prescribed earlier, and the awful days of the bonfires could have been alleviated. No one knew and no one in a hospital ever looks back.

But now there were only two things to think about—accepting the hot-packs and learning the exercises. Even on the second day of my exposure to them, I knew unquestionably that at some time in the future I would not regard them as pleasantly as I did then.

The "think here," that my physio-therapist almost whispered to me as she brushed the muscle on the inside of my arm with her index finger was rather exciting today in its newness. But I had slept reasonably well the night before, and my humor was good. Good humors were not everyday occurrences; I had lived long enough to know that. The arm hurt with such an electric kind of hurt that I was anxious for her to let that go and proceed to something else. That spirit, I knew, would not cure the arm. But I liked this jolly, young woman, with her intense seriousness and her gentility so well that I knew if I could be assured of becoming her private problem, my recovery would be inevitable.

My friends began to inquire more and more about the Sister Elizabeth Kenny treatment, so I asked the nurses if the one I was receiving was the same. They told me that it was a combination of her's and that of our medical men. But when I read specific accounts of the Kenny theory in the newspapers, I could not identify any difference. One of the nurses told me that my physio-therapist had been taught this kind of physio-therapy by a technician who studied for two years under the direct supervision of Sister Kenny in her Institute for Infantile Paralysis in Minneapolis, Minnesota. That satisfied

me completely, and I felt that if the Sister Kenny method had anything to offer in recovery from this strange malady, I would have the opportunity to be a proof of it.

That afternon I received in the mail a clipping out of a newspaper from Ancon, in the Canal Zone, where one of my friends was living. It was of great interest to me, not only because of its content, but because of the mood in which it was written. From it, I could tell that polio was becoming the kind of popular word which had the same spell-binding attraction as the word "cancer". This was the mood of the Canal Zone article. I could almost hear soft organ music playing quietly in the twilight, and see pink and golden clouds on the horizon, as I read of Sister Kenny slowly walking toward a hospital cot on which lay a victim of infantile paralysis—horribly deformed—utterly distracted with unbearable pain. As she arrived at the side of the cot—she raised her hands Heavenward, said something softly to herself, and then brushed her fingers lightly over the afflicted muscles of the unfortunate child before her. And lo! the legs which hadn't a flicker of movement in ten years slowly moved off the cot, and the boy walked!

Even this early in my exposure to her method, or the method which resembled it, I knew that was just a story. And I knew that if miracles did happen in this kind of treatment, they probably would not come within the short minutes of one sunset, but over a period of many sunsets. My interpretation of the treatment, I could be sure was accurate; I could look forward to no miracles, for what I saw before me was logic, lots of hard work and squared jaws, and six-dozen, extra-strong patience pills. As I saw it, we would have little need of medical men, for we required no medicines and no operations. The doctors watched our temperatures, and supervised our vitamins, and were interested in our progress, but the real

job was entirely in the hands of the hot-pack nurses and the physio-therapist.

After the first two treatments by my physio-therapist, my future goals were outlined clearly—step by simple step. My first endeavor was to relax the tensed, already a little distorted muscles, so that they could fall into their normal positions. She told me to move about a little, but not to strain at the complete job of sitting up or moving a leg until my muscles were ready to try it. If I did not comply, I might injure the muscle beyond repair. The crisis of the spasm seemed to be over. What damage the virus could do, it had already done. Relaxation was to get the muscles back into the positions they normally occupied before spasm entered them. Once they were in their proper positions, normal movements would be re-taught them.

"Whenever you are alone," she said, "I want you to pretend that you are a piece of melting butter! Do not try to do the exercises that we do when I am helping you, for your muscles are not strong enough to do the job alone. It is important that you follow my directions, for at the beginning there is hope for the complete recovery of every muscle now affected. Trying to execute a movement while some of the muscles are normally strong and some are affected by polio is executing the wrong kind of movement. In that way, the strong muscle would do most of the work and soon you would find that you could move—even though it would not be a normal movement. Soon then, the weak one would be of no use to you whatever, and so instead of giving it a chance, you would kill it by misuse. This substituting of one strong muscle in the job intended for another, can be a great help when all hope is given up for the restoration of the affected, weak muscle. But we are going to give them all an equal chance for a long time."

She made it all so clear and logical, that I vowed to follow her to the letter. However, once I discovered how refreshing

the exercise could be when I otherwise lay absolutely still hour after hour, the temptation to do them was sometimes greater than I.

"Now I want you to think here," she said, her soft words ringing in my ears, and she lightly brushed her fingertips over the muscle that raised my arm over my head, "as I bring your arm up this way. Now, think here," she went on, indicating a facing muscle with her fingertips, "while I bring it down again."

My eyes were closed, and I was concentrating with all the power I had; but bringing the arm up was like pulling a piece of molding from a plastered wall. It hurt so much that I imagined I almost heard the cracking, pulling sound. My ribs flayed out, and my shoulder shot over in the therapist's direction. Every good, strong, normal muscle I had in my body, from my hip to my head, rushed over to help pull the arm down.

"Yes," she laughed quietly. "That's the way *not* to do it."

"I think I understand," I said. "You mean the right way is the hard way!" and I knew I would have to be a better concentrator if I didn't want to go through life shaking the hands of strangers with the surprising full-swing gesture of a Balinese dancer. I did it! I substituted the strong muscles, and let the weak one's lie! No hits, no runs, one error.

Then I went on to discover that everything was impossible at first. Relaxation, concentration, and just plain moving. It took even more brain-power and will-power than it did muscle power. I saw how necessary it was for the therapist to speak slowly and softly, for every disturbance of noise sent me clinging to that instead of the terrific problem at hand, and the exercise would have to be begun anew. A cough in the hallway or a sneeze in the room assumed the distracting proportions of a circus tent. I was learning a new subject—mental

awareness—and it actually took me six calendar months to locate, mentally, a walking muscle in my leg that played a devilish game of hide and seek in a hidden cave of pain.

The spasm that I thought I could finish off after a day or so of concentrated relaxation turned out to be a very bad penny that turned up time and again when I was over-fatigued—either physically or mentally. Another drowning seige would send the spasm in twitching, jerking order all over my body, or a verbal battle with the head day-nurse.

For some reason the head day-nurse and I got along like cerise-pink and orange-red. She thought I was a baby, and I regarded her as Mrs. Frankenstein. She scolded me because my extravagant friends seemed to send me huge bouquets of flowers all on the same day—and since they wouldn't all fit in my room, I cluttered up her hallways. She thought I was stupid because I was so skinny and never finished my meals. She referred to me as something like a slobber-face because I cried all over my get-well cards. But one evening when I almost drowned on a piece of angelfood cake, she held my hand and directed me so competently and gently that I suddenly understood her gruff-bluff. From that evening on I loved her silently, but would have rather died than say so.

After each seige of spasm, the nurses would have a verbal debate about it. Some were certain that once the outset spasm had ended, it had ended, and that further twitching and jerking indicated a process of restoration of the nerves. Others said that spasm was spasm, and one jerk like another, and that no twitch was a sign of health. One nurse told us that some doctors had attempted to X-ray the twitching muscle, but that it revealed no secrets. Whatever it was, it held no fond place in my regard, and I'd try to melt the butter of my imagination as quickly as possible, lest the spasm make my poor, sick little muscle shorter and shorter with each twitch.

Polio, though, wasn't as simple as "sick" muscles and "well" muscles. As with everything else scientific, there were alternates. I might not be able to move, I was told, because of another reason called "incoordination". In this case, a portion of one muscle might be well while another portion of it was weakened by the virus. That is, the virus in a muscle would not necessarily mean the whole muscle. Incoordination would result in the well part of the muscle doing its job normally, and the affected part doing nothing. That is why the physio-therapist instructed me to move but little when she wasn't around to aid me. If I tried to complete a movement with an incoordinate muscle, the task might be too great for the well part alone, and total damage could easily take place. Incoordinate muscles, therefore, had to be relaxed until the circulation of blood through them could make the strong parts stronger, and the weak parts less weak.

One day, in an endeavor to help me sit up, the physio-therapist explained that my very un-elastic back might be merely a case of "mental alienation." This was a new term introduced into the treatment of polio patients by Sister Kenny. Actually, it seemed there was no way of telling, either by X-rays, blood-tests or muscle dissection, whether the polio virus had actually entered the cells in a chemical form, and done direct destruction. "Mental alienation" therefore became my favorite explanation of poliomyelitis. Spasm was vague, and incoordination was even more vague, but mental alienation I understood. Once I had heard of mental alienation, I felt I had conquered polio. Something had entered my body, either from the feet of a fly, as the invisible algae in the lake, or as a water-colored germ in a glass of water. It came in, gave me a hundred and two fever, upset my stomach, and left me with a kind of numbness that in turn had shocked my sub-conscious brain into an after-effect called infantile paralysis.

After hearing about mental alienation, I had no doubt that the paralysis which I now had I had brought about by my own inability to control my shock system better. And from that day on, no one could convince me that I was paralyzed—I was merely mentally alienated. And this is why: the virus had entered, made me very, very ill, worked itself up to a pitch, exploded itself inside my spinal column like a skyrocket and died there, leaving me numb and so shocked that I couldn't move, but doing no more damage than a beautiful, bronze-starred sky-rocket. It had not invaded each of my muscles, brother by brother, and lay there to propagate. Of this I was convinced, for I knew that no one had ever seen a virus chewing up a muscle, or building a family tree in one. Paralysis was shock, and shock could not be treated by physical medicines, but by a kind of ancient remedy called "psychology,"

Because the sky-rocket hurt my back so when it had exploded I had no room in my small mind at that time to think about my legs or my biceps or the great flat muscle that rolled around my shoulders. In keying myself up for the explosion, I had arched my back to fight the pains, which left such an impression on my memory that now I had a tight padlock on the arch and wouldn't relax it for a kind of unconscious fear that another pain would shoot. It was just as if every time I picked up something, I accidentally managed to prick my index finger. After a while I would stop using my index finger even though the odds against pricking were in my favor. It was so simple! Because of the extreme pain created in the "spasm" stage, a patient would not move for so long a time, that after a while he would have forgotten how to. With the involvement of a whole limb, the pain of just one of the muscles could be remembered, and substitution of the muscle which never hurt would be employed. Soon it would be impossible to remember what the entire unconscious movement

had been. The pain-memory was more recent than the painless one which preceded it. I had the answer! Nothing had been destroyed; it had merely been shocked, and the only job I had was to restore its confidence!

So then I went on to learning about my muscles so that I could patiently understand them and bring them out of their huddled tenseness into free-and-easy normalcy. Each muscle, I learned, had a starting point and an ending point. All movements began at the beginning of a muscle and ended at the end, so that if they were shocked into positions that stretched them beyond their normal length, the starting point of the muscle had to be known to me (mental awareness) so that I would not begin a movement somewhere along the middle of the line. In the case of my shortened heel muscle, my whole foot had been pulled downward into a toe-pointing direction. Before I could pull my foot up to a normal walking position, I had to concentrate on relaxing my Achilles tendon, which little by little would let up the strain on the muscles which ran the longitudinal length of my foot.

It was a job—and I do mean job! How the physio-therapist and I sweated out the hours. Relaxation, which sounds so easy, involved letting thousands of conflicting little Charley-horses interfere and distract before the settling could take place. Ridiculous things like pain bothered tremendously. It hurt, so I'd want to holler, madly! But I was a big girl now, and big girls didn't holler. Then my mind began to think about other big girls playing tennis at the moment, or running up mountainsides in North Carolina, and before I knew it, the concentration path was gone—and I'd have to start all over. Gritting my teeth was a great aid to concentration, but one day I gritted them so hard that I chipped a side off one. Prize-fighters used wax, why couldn't we? If not that, then why not some other diversion to take the nervous part of our minds off to another

world—why not soft, flowing music, or slides of sea-shores or strange, colorful flowers growing in a silent jungle. I needed some psychological safe-guards, but I was afraid the head day-nurse might hear of them, and call me a sissy to my face. That would have been even worse than the charley-horses.

Gradually I sorted out my mental processes to the places where they could do me the most good. Instead of thinking about recovery occurring on a certain day of a certain not-too-distant month, or dreaming up visions of myself catching the last train to Quantico as I wore a new pair of high blue heels, I put consequences away entirely and thought of one thing at a time. If someone would have shown me my little blue chart, made-up in June, with the schedule of the radio- scripts and the five sons, I would have felt as though I were reading one of my first-grade compositions. Time was nothing—the present was all.

Although we went over all of my body-muscles during the physio-therapy treatment each day, I finally discovered that if I just concentrated on one of them a little more than I did on the others, I secured a more favorable result. A favorable result amounted to a slight quiver, which could not yet swing any of the limbs around with it, but which indicated that the muscle inside was looking out of the corner of the door, and might one day be brave enough to come out and work. Sometimes this was difficult since I couldn't always remember if it was my gastrocnemius or trapezius that I had decided to concentrate on the day before. Also if the muscle I had decided to concentrate on showed no movement for several days, I would be tempted to let it go and favor another in which I could feel a tiny bit of a trickle. Sometimes, though, something in my throat from either breakfast or luncheon would distract the entire physio-therapy treatment of the day, and progress would be set back twenty-four hours.

The doctors didn't think too much of my idea of concentrating on only one muscle at a time—but although it was a terribly slow process it worked, with only one minor exception, in all my muscles.

Watching my progress as scientifically as I thought I was doing, helped me tremendously through rough spots which I would not have been able to endure if I hadn't felt they were part of my own experiment.

There were two important muscles in the back of each of my legs which did not respond at all for a long time—three whole months in the right leg, and six months in the other. They were my most important walking muscles, and I frantically found myself changing concentration from one to the other. Then I realized that in my quandary I was creating a state of utterly incomplete concentration on either—so I changed my approach completely. I was far behind with these muscles, for by the end of three months I could almost wave my arm, and my feet were resting normally against the footboard of the polio-bed. I had even conquered the fear of my mentally alienated back and could sit up for hours. But the muscles in my leg weren't keeping up; in fact, they weren't even waking up. In great haste I gave up almost every other occupation, and night and day (as often as I could manage) I lay on my stomach and concentrated on the muscle at the back of my right leg, and nothing else in the world. I would shut my eyes and mutter droningly, "My leg is melting, my leg is melting" until my roommates in almost hysterical passion would be ready to fling themselves from their beds and roll on the floor in convulsive laughter. But I was determined to melt the roly-poly hard muscle that could be felt but would not move.

I guess I even muttered in my sleep, for one morning just as I woke up, I began to turn over and as I did, I felt a slight

flicker! I socked my head into the mattress and cried so emotionally that I was too excited to repeat the movement. It took two whole days before I could calm myself enough for the utter relaxation I needed to feel the flicker again. The room was quiet; my physio-therapist hardly breathed, and then—the flicker was there. This time I had a witness, and one who was as joyous as I—for we had accomplished the impossible together.

One day a visiting doctor from South America was brought into the room where my physio-therapy treatment was being administered.

"This is our miracle-girl," my doctor said, as he introduced us. "She not only eats and talks, but one of these days she will be able to stand up and walk"—

One of these days, perhaps, but not yet. As far as I could see, there were no miracles in this business.

CHAPTER V

We Are Never Alone

PACKS were never given during the night. Lenore and I laughing decided that the polio virus went off-duty at seven o'clock in the evening (when our last pack was removed), and that he didn't work Saturday afternoon, Sundays or holidays. However, rest-periods from the packs were thought to be essential to allow normal reactions to take place. At any rate, their intense heat was weakening and the little red welts which arose the first day continued, sometimes taking the shapes of red but not serious burns. The packs also acted as real reducers, and for most of us gaining weight was a step as important as the others.

The physio-therapy exercises became the highlight of every day. After lying in the heavy, hot packs, when moving was recommended but almost impossible to execute, the "physio-recess" was a delightful picker-upper.

By the third week my voice changed from the raucous bed-spring one, with a range from "do" to "re", to another which strove to an almost "mi". I couldn't pronounce "S's", soft "C's", "M's", "P's", or "B's". The most difficult task in my day's work was to tell people my name.

"Hello," the new nurse would say, "I'm Miss Jones."

"How hdo hhoo hdo, hihh hshonehh," I'd say, "I'n hnihh hlinhuhuhh!"

At the end of the second week, Lenore left. She was going to another hospital for a different kind of famous treatment known as hydrotherapy. It involved a kind of whirlpool "massage" in a large tank of water. She left at nine o'clock in the evening, and once again I re-lived the misery of living alone. With farewell tears we vowed to keep each other constantly informed about the progress of our muscles and the exact state of our conditions. Two men, wearing black suits and black caps, lifted her off the bed onto the stretcher which had a black blanket with a zipper running down the center of it. As they wheeled her out of the doorway she called back over her shoulder, "Vive Sinatra!"

I looked about me at the vases and baskets of beautiful flowers. Fresh ones had been coming every day and I felt like a princess in her very own garden. Tillie had given them all strong steam baths; but in spite of a few wilts here and there, they stood pretty and cheering like a line of chorus girls. Inside by bedside table were four toppling stacks of letters and cards which I would have to part with when my isolation period was up, for I could take nothing from the contagious room with me.

I was ill, but evidently a lot of people were sorry. I was in a kind of Heaven for I loved everyone because everyone loved me. On the top of the table was a jig-saw letter designed to pass away the time of convalescents. It came broken apart into twenty-five pieces, and I never completely learned its message. Since I could not sit up I could not patch it together on the few bumps I made on my counterpane, and none of the nurses had the time to do it for me. I could not even give it to my parents to solve, for of course it was "contaminated"! I frequently cursed the fiend who thought up the jig-saw letter.

Now the room was so quiet! I tired of reading and then the telephone rang. It was where Lenore could have reached it—if Lenore had been there! By the time the nurse came, the telephone had settled into silence. There was a brown line that went around the room, matched beginning with end, and started around again. A woman in the next room began to cry, but not a footstep of a nurse could be heard. The night had covered the Lake view of the window. Yes, indeed, the Lord had made the night too long! Bang! The water faucet exploded and sent the aspirator bottle in fragments on the floor. Two nurses! An interne! At once, from out of nowhere! The suicide-squad, no doubt, and they left without even saying good-night as if the patient in "448" had a friend who was a gremlin plumber!

The following day, a doctor whom I had not seen before came to visit me. He had mussed strawberry-blond hair, and little blond whiskers that should have been cut the day before yesterday thistled his face. Bevies of freckles crammed his skinny white arms, and between two long fingers he ceremoniously bore a long, hypodermic needle.

"Say 'story-telling time,' " he said soberly.

"Why?" I said.

"Because bulbars say it so funny!"

We squealed together as he sunk in the needle, and then with a sober nod and without another word he departed.

"What was that stuff?" I asked the nurse who came in then.

"Don't let it worry you," she said. "Everyone's so busy around here that he probably meant it for the crying lady next door."

"Please," I begged. "I promise not to tell a soul."

"I don't think I'm supposed to tell you," she said, as she busily gathered up the laundry and went out.

She returned a little while later with some fresh towels and

said, "Polio is still pretty much of a deep, dark secret, you know. Almost all of its cures are still in the experimental stage. If someone wanted to try an experiment on you, how would you feel about it?"

"I'd want to help," I said.

"You know," she said cleverly, "that shock-therapy is being used for a great many things now. They use drugs like adrenalin, insulin, or prostigmine, to create reactions that are often responsible for amazing recoveries. Adrenalin is really a wonderful medicine," and she picked up the breakfast tray and went out. I winked at the tiny red spot where the hypodermic needle entered the mysterious mine of my leg. For two hours I waited in great expectation, but nothing happened! I didn't even get drowsy. As I was thinking about it, my teeth suddenly began to chatter and I began to shake like an alcoholic anonymous. I buzzed for the nurse, who threw two more woolen blankets over me, took my temperature and my pulse. While she was counting the heart-beats, though, the shaking suddenly stopped. We looked bewilderedly at each other, and she grimaced and dropped my hand as she disgustedly looked at me and said, "You put a hole in the experiment!"

After dinner that evening my stacks of greeting cards, my freshest flowers, and my tooth brush were moved along with me back to the room where I had spent my first awful night. I hated the idea intensely, not only because it was the most cheerless room I had ever seen but because it seemed to represent a superstitious and ominous regression. Even so, I have always enjoyed being a room-squatter, and although there isn't a place in the world where I wouldn't enjoy hanging my walking-stick, I always like to call a particular room *home.*

Another bed had been moved into the room and it was in the same corner where the respirator had been. On it lay a jovial, dark-eyed girl who even in her nightie looked like well-

sized twins. Her name was Chrysanthemum, but even that did not cheer me; I doubt that I even said "hello." The paint on the wall seemed to smell familiar, and even though I was given the nicer bed of the two (the one nearer the window), I was too disgusted to eat my evening potatoes, and cried like a stepped-on puppy dog when the nurse reprimanded me. I was determined to stay awake all night and keep watch for whatever might spring from the smelly paint and try to strangle me.

Chris tried her best to entertain me, and even read stories to me from her movie magazines. However, even that annoyed me, and I hushed her with the bold statement, "I'm a very sick girl," and turned my sulking face to the hateful wall alongside my bed where some stupid nurse had emptied her fountain pen of reddish-brown ink.

Even concentrated sulking can live but a short while, so I found myself trying with all my muscles to laugh out loud at Chris's trials as a sleeper. She was a polio, too, and had been at the hospital just a day or so when I moved in with her. Her polio was just in one leg, and although it had really incapacitated her, it was not too great a burden to bear. She fell asleep with a candy-bar in her hand and a magazine on her chest, and suddenly she sat bolt upright in bed and began to chatter in a streamlined kind of Greek that was the most rapid waterfall of syllables I had ever heard.

She topped off the message with a screeched "Mama, Mama!" which promptly woke her up. She looked about her innocently and then said pathetically to me, "Oh, I wish I could sleep!"

This turned out to be an all-night routine; sometimes the Greek message was delivered sitting up, and sometimes lying down, but it always ended with the "Mama! Mama!" and the pathetic "Oooh, if I could only sleep—if I could o-n-l-y

z z z z z—" and we were off again! . . . The Woody Herman stage, no doubt!

I liked Chris better the next day, after I had so intimately shared her sleep all night; but at two in the afternoon, I never disliked anyone so intensely in all my life. Since this was still a "contagious" room, my parents were not yet allowed to enter it. When they came to visit that afternoon, however, and stood at the doorway talking to me, I could not even see them for the huge lump Chris made in the bed blotted them out completely.

I was still talking like a tongue-tied Mortimer Snerd, and since no one had any recommendations for any bulbar cure, I decided that evening to take one in my own hands. I made up a list of exercises which I conscientiously followed for many months. The exercises were: saying (for singing was impossible—ever) the musical scale "do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do," and although anything from "mi" on up had the same tone, I tried them all just the same. The second exercise was the complete alphabet, carefully and slowly pronounced—each letter rounded out with public-speaking perfection. The third exercise was the words "story-telling time." These exercises, I later found, took as much concentration and effort as almost any of those directed by my physio-therapist. I also practiced taking long breaths through my nose and trying to purse my lips into a whistle. Needless to say, I was frequently embarrassed by accusations that I was talking to myself.

Chris left the room on the fourth day we were together. She had been discharged from the hospital to receive treatments at home from the emergency corps of visiting nurses, and her place would be occupied by a more critical patient who needed direct hospital care. I was sorry that I had been such horrible company for her, for after all she was not well either. Her dear mother came to take her home, and brought a big box of

chocolates for me. Chris and I also planned to keep in touch, and I was going to send her muscle-charts of my progress.

Then I was discharged from the ugly cell too, and moved out of contagion at last down the hall to a charming corner room that had two windows. One of them overlooked the Outer Drive, and I could actually see a generous sliver of the Lake. Outside of the other window was a brick wall that resembled one of a Spanish-styled villa. In the three weeks that I had been away from a view of the out-of-doors, I discovered that fall had replaced summer. The wind made a stronger noise around the corner of our room and the breeze from the window ventilators was definitely cool. Perhaps the hot-packs would soon be quite a luxury. When my parents came into the room that evening there was a grand old family reunion and I threw my arms about each of them as if I had been away for a year. Mother was wearing her fur-trimmed fall suit, and my father, his topcoat.

"Think of the hosiery bills you're saving, Dearie," he laughed.

My new roommate's name was Barbara. I couldn't see all of her when I was rolled into the room on my hospital cart, for she was face down on another cart having her hair washed at the sink. At the window which faced the "villa" was another girl in skirt and sweater, dabbing cologne behind her ears.

"What is this," I said, "party night?"

The two nurses who accompanied me, the one at the sink with Barbara, Barbara and the girl with the cologne, all laughed merrily in unison.

"It's not what you say, but the way you say it," one nurse said. My heart bled for Mortimer!

While Barbara's hair was being combed and braided into pig-tails and tied with small, yellow chrysanthemums at their ends, I was transferred into the new bed and the back of it was

cranked-up so that I could see out of the Lake-view window.

The girls with Barbara were nurses, off-duty. It surprised me to find that nurses wore plaid skirts and ankle-socks and sloppy-Joe sweaters, for I had ceased to think of any nurse as belonging to the ordinary, every-day life. A nurse, out of uniform, somehow didn't look capable of filling the strenuous bill their lives involved. Barbara, I learned, was a student nurse and also a polio. She had been caring for the children in the polio ward at the children's annex of Michael Reese, which was called Sarah Morris hospital. She was just twenty-one, and had only eleven days to go to finish her nurse's training when the running nose and fever she went to bed with one evening turned out to be poliomyelitis. At first her stiff neck and 102 fever seemed to resemble symptoms of pneumonia, but when she collapsed as she attempted to get out of bed, a sample of her spinal fluid was taken and the polio virus was discovered there.

After Barbara was fixed in a pair of fancy blue pajamas and had run her lipstick tube across her pretty mouth, the other nurses left. I was fascinated by her toilet, for I hadn't the energy to comb my hair properly for the past three weeks. Washing it was strictly outlawed, since I seemed still to be considered a rather "critical" patient, and none of the nurses could be bribed to outlaw the orders on my hospital chart. To me, living with hair that could not be washed at least once a week was the strictest kind of torture. For years my young men remembered me as the girl who kept them waiting while she dried the last curl with her hair-dryer. My hair was long, and the hurried nurses were impatient with the tangles, so my daily coiffure usually amounted to rebraiding yesterday's braids and smoothing the hair on top with a short-toothed, strictly surface comb. Anyway, I truthfully hadn't thought very much about grooming, and the fact that Barbara was

wearing her own pajamas instead of the un-ironed hospital gown surprised me no end.

While we were getting acquainted that evening, someone knocked at our door. "Here he is," Barbara twinkled, and took one quick last look in the mirror which she hurled into her bedside table as the door swung open. I didn't know what to expect, and was very unhappy that I had not been warned, for there, entering the room, was a very handsome young gentleman. I tried to hide behind my face like a minstrel behind his black cork make-up, but of course the young man saw me anyway. He was sitting in a wheel-chair, a blanket covering his lap and legs.

"Hello Barby," he said, with a twinkle related to the one on Barby's face, and then when Barbara introduced us and I said "Hhow hdo hyou hdo" a quizzical grin passed over his face. "Hello Mortimer," he said, and I turned my head the other way. Well, I wasn't a glamour girl now!

Bill brought a box of cookies with him, and I watched him and Barby eat them all. They had offered them to me too, of course, but I was a long way from eating cookies. Eating, I decided, was the most terrible public habit devised. It would be much better if it were confined to individual little stalls, where no one could watch. I could almost picture a room-full of little red-velvet upholstered stalls with chairs facing inside of them, camellias floating in glass bowls, and the good food coming to the table on individual dumb-waiters at the side. I thought of those stalls many times after, when I found a difficult bowl of soup before me in a crowded, musical restaurant where the rushing waiters or eager customers would jar my chair just as the soup was to go down in careful order to prevent public drowning.

Bill had been a C.A.P. pilot with one semester left to finish before graduating from the University of Illinois when polio

bit him, and bit him hard. He had been in the hospital for over a year when I met him, and although he wore two braces on his legs, he was yet unable to walk. His ambitions went on, however, and he was continuing his engineering courses; a position awaiting him at the beginning of the coming year.

He was splendid company, and since he was a daily visitor, it did not take long for me to collect a rather handsome hospital wardrobe. Mother became my dependable hair-dresser, and soon I too was wearing chrysanthemums or ribbons which matched my pajamas and bed-jackets. When I asked Mother to bring me the brightest red lipstick she could buy, she was delighted for she was certain that I was becoming a normal woman once again.

I was highly grateful to Bill for making his appearance when he did, for in a short time a new interne came on our service, and how happy I was to be wearing red and white dotted pajamas and little red carnations in my pigtails the first day he asked me to stick out my tongue.

The new interne was tall and dark with a pale, noble skin and as he walked into the room the first time, I was sure that his name would be Count Vronsky, and I wondered if my one little ring might make him think I looked a little like Anna Karenina. He had the kindest, slowest, softest, most impersonal medical manners, and a few months later I knew I was definitely going to be all right, for when he took my pulse I definitely felt a butterfly in my stomach!

When I had been with Barbara for a few days, the same strawberry-blonde doctor who paid me a visit with the long hypodermic needle came to see Barbara. She was the subject of a new experiment, it seemed, but being a nurse, she knew benzedrine when she saw it. She was given small doses daily, and when no effect occurred the dosage was confidently increased. What someone miscalculated was that benzedrine

has an accumulative effect, and suddenly on a wild Saturday night, the grains she had been taking all week collaborated for a real exposition. They gave a magnificent blow-out, and provided sufficient excitement for several doctors and nurses who rushed about preparing electric cardiographs and emergency oxygen. The next day was Barbara's birthday, and the teaching-staff of the nursing school had planned a lovely party in her honor. But her roses went unsniffed, and the whipped-cream cake untouched. For Barby was sleeping-it-off! We all wondered a little about the benzedrine spree, though, for Barbara recovered completely within just four months.

Soon our physio-therapist began to allow Barbara to leave her bed and walk a few steps. She was full of quivers and her steps looked shaky and funny. I thought that I ought to get up and show her a nicer-looking way to walk, for even though all my physio-therapy still took place on the bed, it never occurred to me that I couldn't get up and walk as I had always—if I were just a few pounds fatter.

Barbara set a wonderful precedent for me, and seeing her recover so speedily left no question in my mind but that one of these days I would be up and about doing what she was doing—only just a little faster, for she walked like a snail.

Barbara was my roommate for most of the days of my utterly exhausting swallowing, and she would sit at the side of her bed grinning and calling me "Ghandi," as she tore away at a roast-chicken drumstick with all the repression of a hungry guest at a renaissance-era banquet. I met her gaze squarely, and then lifting my nose went discreetly back to the dish of cottage cheese or strained spinach that I had been eating a whole hour already.

The daytime routines had not changed. There were still the afternoons, and the three long meals. The evenings, though,

grew pleasant as soon as I had become Barbara's roommate. After our regular outside visitors, Bill came to call, and when he left at ten-thirty, we listened to the symphonies on our radio. When Barbara was able to walk, she made her nightly journey to the sink to do her evening's wash, and small bits of ribbon, white bed-socks, or dainty handkerchiefs were draped about the room on chairs or over the long rod which separated Barbara's bed from mine with a beige cotton curtain. All in all, with the beige, brown and orange striped draperies at the windows, our books, cookie boxes, potted plants and radio, the room took on a sorority-house atmosphere.

By the third week in October, the hospital became accustomed to the fact that I would be living there a while longer, so they proceeded to entertain me. One day a young woman wearing a very nice smile came to see me.

"You're going to stuff a teddy-bear," she said, patting my cheek. "Now won't that be fun?"

My mouth dropped.

"I'd rather color a picture book," I said, "or if you have the wonderful kind that will spring into full color when I hold them under the water faucet, I'd like that even better."

She stepped back as if I had bitten her. I almost thought I had—anyway, I felt like doing it. Coloring a picture-book incidentally wasn't a spontaneous thought, for there was nothing I liked better to do, and in my room at home I had several to suit my moods. In one were fat chickens and back-views of rabbits, and in the other were more intricate princesses and knights and sample-pages to show how they ought to be colored. The ones that I adored most for years were those which, when painted with a soft, camel-hair brush and a glass of plain water, turned into magical pieces of pinks and greens and blues. They were ruined for me, however, when I upset the glass of water on them one day and suddenly discovered I

could get the same effect if I held the whole book at once under a water faucet. I dreaded to ask for one though, for fear the head day-nurse might enter as I was coloring a princess's face green because her girdle looked too tight.

The young woman who offered the red calico teddy-bear to me stepped backward and holding a brown bag of cotton in one hand and the limp teddy in the other, said, "You put this (the cotton) in here," indicating a rip down the middle of the empty abdomen.

"This, in here," I said, putting Teddy into the bag of cotton, and the young woman left at once.

"You shouldn't have done that," Barbara reprimanded. "She's the Occupational Therapist: if patients aren't able to follow her directions, they are visited next by the psychiatrist!"

"But Barby," I pleaded, "a red teddy-bear!" I saw that she didn't understand however, and a day or so later she was sewing button eyes on a blue and yellow elephant.

The Occupational Therapist, however, tried again, with weaving-looms for red and black pot-holders, or a green leatherette whip-the-edge cigarette case, but I wasn't interested. Finally she just came to see Barbara who, like a good girl, was lining the big magazine table with elephants, teddy-bears, cigarette case, pot-holders, and a bias-tape bound baby's bib. I was a little repentant, but I just didn't seem to fit anywhere into Patient Occupation Plan, No. 606-b. Soon I began to create my own occupations, I guess just to show them I could. I began to knit yarn "fascinators" for Christmas gifts, and unsatisfied with their usual, lovers-knot look, I ordered a jar of beautiful wooden beads like the kind they let children string. These I tied into gaudy fringes, or interwove into the yarn. Then I decided to make earrings from a sample swatch-pad of suede I had kept at home as a souvenir of my

shoe department days. The earrings were fun, and the two starting designs were the faces of little yellow ducks with round blue-suede eyes, and flower-pots sprouting steel-bead hyacinths. I thought they were lovely, but the Occupational Therapist wasn't a bit interested. Then Mother brought my two-year old afghan project, and for two whole weeks I made two squares a day, and then forgot all about it, as I turned to my heavyweight edition of *War and Peace.*

My biggest source of entertainment, however, was still my voice. Except when I had to project it to serious conversations over a telephone, I really enjoyed it. Its range was so limited that it gave a sing-song effect that was very unusual for the American tongue. One day when my preoccupied mind was off wandering by itself, from the conversation at hand, I said, "Uhm-hmmm" instead of the audible "yes." Barbara laughed.

"You sounded exactly like a cow mooing," she said. So I tried it again, and discovered that I did—just exactly.

Thereafter it became our favorite joke, and we found it to be especially effective in my before-breakfast voice. Barbara was frequently visited by members of the Training School Office. There was no way to explain, I sighed, as I opened my eyes after a particularly well-delivered low, and found the head of the school of nursing standing in the doorway sternly regarding me.

By now I had learned that the best way to get along in a hospital was to repeat silently to oneself, at consistent intervals throughout the day, "I am a patient, I am a patient," which meant that as an individual, one must become accustomed to receiving as much recognition, especially individual, personality recognition, as an oleo salesman at a butter convention. But no matter how often I repeated the reminder, I simply could not become Number 336368 on the hospital chart—I was still Noreen Linduska!

From the very beginning I found a great dislike for the vocabularies of most of the hospital personnel. I couldn't quite adjust myself to their little jokes about livers and lungs, which seemed to be words that ought to be spoken of only in private. At the same time, while they were calling a spleen a spleen, there were formal, correct words for objects that didn't seem to matter. Emisis basin, for example, seemed so ridiculous, so I called it a spittoon. I was corrected coolly, looked at distantly as if I had emitted some vulgar obscenity and corrected again.

But a spittoon it remained! I was merely fighting their kind of fire with my own brand. Mouth wipes, too—I called them Kleenex—because I used them for both my nose and my lipstick. At our home, on every day except Sundays and holidays, the noon meal was called "lunch" and the evening meal "dinner"—not supper, and I perpetually confused the dietician because I had ordered my evening meal for the afternoon, and said I didn't want any supper, which I thought would be served at bed-time.

The T-Binders and Breast-Binders in which I dressed for my physio-therapy exercises were my gym-suit. My reputation was quite established!

I learned too, early in October, that all nurses weren't reincarnated Florence Nightingales, and some seemed to like everything in their profession except the monotonous, dragging task of caring for polios. With slight regard for our feelings, each month there would be at least one, long-striding, robustly healthy, shiny-nosed female assigned to the onerous task of having to care for a measly polio who probably didn't dress herself because she was lazy, and probably didn't walk up to the clothes closet and get her physio-therapy clothes because she lay there in her cozy bed enjoying delusions of grandeur. One little lady, whom I remember accurately

enough to describe in my sleep had, strangely enough, a reputation among the doctors and the staff as an outstanding nurse. She moved quickly and quietly, and perhaps under the operating lights was a little angel in white shoes. But I found her to move so quickly and so quietly, that after I had asked for a drink of water a time or two, she would be out of my room and halfway up the hall before I had noticed that she forgot to leave it.

Day after day, when it came time to dress into my gym suit, so that I would be ready for the physio-therapist and not lose any of the valuable minutes of exercising which were assigned to me, Miss Efficiency would be nowhere around. My flashing lights would bring nurses from all ends of the corridors—but somehow, Lady White-Locks, whose sole duty was to dress me, was nowhere to be found. About a second before the bell she would enter, look at me in utter exasperation, and say, "Aren't you ready yet? It's time for your physio-therapy now!"

After the third day of some such remonstrance, I thought that she had such an ugly temper toward my incapacity because she felt more badly than she cared to express, and was just compensating with negative attitudes. However, when she forgot the glass of water time and again, and when she set up the luncheon tray just a mite beyond my reach, I had ceased making such Christian allowances; for after all, she made me feel like nothing more than a poor, helpless cripple! On a particular Friday afternoon, our room was graced with the presence of a charming Nurse's Aid. It was just a short time before my physio-therapy appointment, so she fetched my gym suit from the closet, stacked my hot packs in neat little piles and promised that she would accidentally forget to tell Miss Efficiency that she had done so.

I giggled and pulled the blankets up under my chin. At two-fifteen, right on schedule, Miss Vision appeared. "Well, not ready I suppose!" she said, and the words bounced off her

chin. With another of the familiar exasperated sighs, she banged open the closet door and began to rummage for my gym suit. I lay there watching her in wide-eyed innocence, as winks kept crossing my shut eyes. Finally she came back to the bed, and said that she might as well remove the hot-packs anyway—and there I lay—completely garbed! I pretended that I was as surprised as she, and even managed a frightened look. Shortly thereafter I heard her voice in the hallway, telling the head day-nurse that I'd better be interviewed by the psychiatrist—but quick—since I didn't even know when I was dressed.

"You'd better be careful," Barbara said. "She means it, and you wouldn't want anyone to see the psychiatrist talking to you, would you?" And I could tell that Barbara thought nothing could be a greater shame.

I kept remembering the episode throughout my physiotherapy lesson the next day, and I recalled my favorite psychiatric experience, and told the therapist about it. It occurred the winter before, while I was riding to the office on the street-car. It was early in the morning, and the car was crowded with grouchy, sleepy people. At one point, we picked up the tired night shift on its way home. I was sitting in the middle of a side-seat, since I had learned that there I would be less trampled on, or less apt to be whanged with a metal lunch pail by those descending, and still be able to push my way out of the crowded car when it came to my stop. I was a seasoned traveler on this route, so I sat there unconcernedly knowing that I was dividing a seat for two, while I read Bemelmans' "I Love You, I Love You, I Love You." Two burly defense workers came in together, cast me a wicked look, and then sat on either side of me. Suddenly the man on my right began to read my book over my arm, and at once he became aware of its title.

"Choe!" he shrieked out loud to the man at the other side of me, "Choe! would cha get a load of dis: I love you, I love you, I love you!"

Joe looked at him like crazy!

But the poor old fellow couldn't contain himself. "I love you Choe," he insisted, and springing from his seat, he kneeled on one knee in front of Joe, and laughing with the kind of expression that made him look as though he were crying, he said again, "I love you, I love you, I love you! Three times!"

I smiled at Joe and pointed to the title of my book, so Joe, falling in with his pal's game, said "Gee, Mike, Tanks," and kissed him with full crescendo on his forehead.

It was simply spectacular, and I was hurting and crying with laughter. I didn't think they were a bit deranged, but an elderly lady across the aisle did, and so did the conductor. He promptly put them off. I tried to pull the conductor's coat and show him the jacket of the shocking book, but he turned around and said, "You too, lady?" so I sat back in my seat and looked out of the window to wave to my pals. They were standing on the corner we were leaving, shaking their fists at me and saying something which I could not hear.

No, the psychiatrist did not scare me, not in the least. I would remember to ask him to explain my technicolored dreams!

The time, surprisingly enough, went quickly. Although day-to-day progress was not noticeable, week-to-week progress was. The only major disaster that had occurred by mid-October was in moving Barbara and me from the very beautiful corner room to one past the center of the corridor. Ourselves, our radio, cookie boxes, magazines, books, flowers, Teddy bears and the rest of the menagerie were loaded on two hospital carts and put into the room right across from the steam kitchen. Tillie, the old washing machine, was the cause

of it all, for it seemed she was getting too old and too uncertain to tread the extra half-block to our room six times daily. Our new room was also very close to the noisy visitors' alcove, and the one window in it showed nothing but a gray cornerstone of the children's hospital, and a very bleak October sky. Barbara and I held everyone except Tillie responsible for the move, and we spoke only to each other for two days!

Life was really moving on. Barbara had now begun to take fifty-foot walks by herself, and I had at last learned to sit up again. The first five-minute sitting-up period made me feel as if I had just gone through six consecutive double-features. Polio pain is fear pain. The muscles all over my body felt like my stomach used to when I'd almost lose it in a quick-dropping elevator. The fear I felt when I first sat up made sitting harder and consequently more painful than if I had not been afraid. Every new exercise (such as sitting up) introduced a new fear until some intensive research into my memory could help me treat it as a more innate action. Sitting at the edge of the high polio-bed meant looking down the long way to the mottled, marble floor. It looked hard and distant and dangerous. When I told my therapist about it, she put a pillow at the approximate distance my head would hit, should I topple. The effect was amazing! My confidence magically increased and I relaxed! The pillow was not half the help that the therapist herself was, but somehow it was a nice soft, psychological safeguard. Sitting up was really an accomplishment, and I was so thrilled about it that whenever I awoke during the night I immediately practiced sitting up and lying down, just to make certain I had not forgotten how.

The ability to sit-up opened a lot of new doors for me, and on the last week in October, I received permission to sit up in a wheel chair, although my arms were not strong enough to wheel it myself. This was almost like getting Navy wings, I

imagine, and how pleased my parents were the afternoon they found me waiting for them, all dressed up with ribbons and a house coat, rocking back and forth in a wheel chair.

Sitting up also meant that now I would be able to have my physio-therapy exercises on the main floor of the hospital in the beautiful physio-therapy gymnasium. Although I could not yet be trusted to make the ascent in the elevator by wheel chair, I was conveyed there, well wrapped in gray and brown blankets, on the hospital cart. The trip was the highlight of every day, for I not only saw some of the people who conversed in the hallway outside our room, but also all the visitors with their pretty hats and coats on as they waited in the foyer for the elevator to take them to their floors. I regarded them as intently as they did me, for we considered each other rather arresting sights. The physio-therapy gymnasium was shined and polished, and had trapezes, rowing-machines, and a basket-ball, although the room itself was only about fifteen by twenty-five feet large. At either end of the room were large mirrors, like those in my ballet-teacher's studio; up and down the walls were rungs that looked like practice ladders. I received my exercises on a stationary table, and was able to watch myself in the mirror's reflections. The first view I had of myself in my gym suit was indeed startling, for I saw that I had become a scrawny, palish, skin-covered skeleton with no chest, and no calves in my pretty legs.

The first few exercises in the gymnasium were not very successful, for the trip through the public-trespassed corridors and the rocky descent in the elevator quite took my breath away. It was even rather exciting to be rolled off the hospital cart onto the table and back again. But after a week I began to accustom myself to these new thrills.

In the physio-therapy department I met more people. Other polios besides Barbara, who were getting well too, were also

permitted to make the exciting pilgrimage to the gymnasium.

Shortly after my trips to the physio-therapy department had begun, our therapist suggested that Barbara and I pay an evening visit to Violet and Lissa, the two girls who lived in the room next to ours. I suddenly discovered that Lissa was the name of the girl who occupied the respirator in the room the day I arrived at the hospital. She was not yet well-enough to make the trip to the gymnasium, or to sit in a wheel chair, so Barbara and I went to visit her that very evening, since I could not wait to meet her.

Barbara and I dressed for the occasion, with lipstick and ribbons, and left for our first evening's visit. Lissa was as anxious to see me as I was to see her and I found her to be pretty and very gay. Before I had known her very long, I knew that she would be the perfect subject for a pamphlet I had once planned to write for the *Ladies' Home Journal.* It was called "Girls and Poise." Even in her flat-back position, for she could not yet sit up, she had the perfect bearing which seems so unaffected in some young women. She had read all the books I liked to discuss, and was well-acquainted with the rigid aspects of good music and art.

Violet, her roommate, was just thirteen years old and she was wheezing very contentedly in an oxygen tent as we came in. A big, fat, yellow teddy bear (of the store-stuffed variety) was in the tent with her. She had developed the sniffles, and since she hadn't been out of her respirator very long the oxygen tent just helped her luxuriously carry on breathing with half the effort it took outside of it. She was such a happy little girl that she made living in her tent look like a part she was playing in a human comedy. Violet and I discovered later that we had sympathetic vibrations, and we vied for our physio-therapist's affection by writing insane poems to and about her. We later learned that no matter how critically ill

Violet might be at one moment, she could be wildly laughing and calling for some good old Yankee food like pop-corn or hot dogs next.

Barbara and I visited Violet and Lissa every evening thereafter. But the visits were very short ones, for no matter how we desired social life, we seemed to get ridiculously weary after fifteen or twenty minutes of it. After we had known them about a week, they were moved to another room at the end of our corridor, which as yet was too far for Barbara and me to reach. We sent daily notes back and forth to each other, however. They lived in Room 476 and signed their notes "The Spirits of '76."

Early in November, Barbara's and my favorite ensign entered bearing a small flower box under each arm. They were gardenias for Barbara and me. "And when you can walk, I'll bring you a bottle of yellow chartreuse."

"Incidentally," he said while we were recovering from hysterical laughter at his last tale from his days at sea, "who're the two Don Juans next door?"

Barbara and I both stopped in the middle of the laughter and shrieked, "What! Young men? Here? In this hospital?" And we teased our physio-therapist for days because she had failed to ask us to visit the young men, who had moved into Lissa's and Violet's room. In a few evenings we received a written invitation from them saying something silly such as:

"Since we're down and gout, won't you come to call
on us this evening at seven-thirty?

Jack and Jay."

We had all the necessary permissions and were waiting for some such masculine move. That evening we wore gardenias in our hair and I wore my new red and white candy striped housecoat. Barbara now was strong enough not only to walk by herself, but to push my wheel chair, so at seven-thirty we

adjusted our robes and knocked at our new neighbors' door.

Jack, it so happened, was just thirteen years old, and Barbara and I looked at each other a little disappointed. That was before we knew him! Jay, on the other hand, was obviously of the age that isn't inquired, and filled our expectations almost too perfectly.

Jack we came to regard as one of our hospital "experiences" and we soon began to beat a pathway to the room next door. He was the most wonderful little monster we had ever met—a George Raft, John Garfield and baby gorilla all rolled into one. We soon began to call him "Blackie" or "Rocco," and he taught us pastimes with cards that in a future emergency we could call on for more than just "entertainment". He was a demon for calling "sevens", even with our own dice. At all times of the day, and frequently during odd hours of the night, he would be positively busting wide open with spirit. A day never got too gloomy when Jack was our neighbor. He was, to put it in his own words, "crazy mad" for Harry James, and had quite an elderly eye for pretty nurses. In a characteristic shoulder-shrug that bumped his new chin whiskers, he said he just had a little limp—dat's all—but we knew that he hadn't begun to walk yet.

Jay was the perfect contrast to Jack. They were as much alike as the bubonic plague and sunflowers. Jay had finished his twenties, I assumed, and had a few Yale degrees behind him. He had just returned from a visit to his home in Connecticut and a gay whirl in New York, when polio caught him. We pointed him out to all our guests as the man who had seen the original cast in *Oklahoma!* He was the display director of one of the largest department stores on State Street, and so we began immediately by having a great deal to talk about.

While we were visiting in Jack's and Jay's room one evening, someone else knocked at the door, and a beautiful red-

haired girl wheeled herself in. She had been told about us while she was in the physio-therapy department that afternoon, and since her room was on another floor where no young people were, she had come to join us. Her resemblance to Joan Crawford was so startling, that Barbara and I looked at Jay simultaneously and almost gave up further conversation on our own behalf.

Henrietta, the beauteous red-head, had a rheumatic heart which kept her in and out of hospitals and in and out of wheel chairs for a great many years. She soon won us all for she turned out to be the life of every party, and the only one of us who could think up a new game when everything else seemed used-out. The doctors and nurses adored her too. She was just twenty-four and fitted very comfortably into our ageless circle.

Thereafter, every night was party night, and soon Pearl, the evening housekeeper on the floor, began making our get-togethers like real parties. She would bring in glasses of freshly squeezed orange juice even when oranges were almost extinct on the markets, and plates of flat cookies that she had found hiding in the kitchen. Frequently she stayed too to talk to the five of us, and that is when we liked her best. Her memoirs included endless stories of strange deaths in hospitals where she had worked for almost all her grown-up life. She was a kind of nomadic Susie Slagle and told us of medical students she had mothered who later turned out to be world-famous surgeons.

After we knew her for awhile, we decided that it was undoubtedly Pearl who had mixed the forbidden batter for the waffle-story we had heard from several different nurses. The waffle-story was a real hospital legend. Several years before we came there were eight young polios living together in a large ward that was now devoted to the chronic female

patients. In this group escapade followed escapade, and one day they promised to do something especially devilish unless Pearl would buy them off with a batch of waffles. One of the patients' mother brought down the family waffle iron, and night after night the faint aroma of baking waffles wafted its way down the sterile hospital corridor. The same threats to carry out the devilish deed were held over Pearl's poor head day after day. Unsatisfied appetites up and down the corridor, whose dull menus consisted of the normal hospital fare, suddenly turned to ire. One day a patient not far from the polio room began to scream hysterically in the middle of the night "SOMEBODY IN THIS HOSPITAL IS EATING WAFFLES!" And consequently a mild sort of riot ensued from other patients who wanted one teeny waffle too. A chief nurse rushed into the ward and caught Pearl down on her knees near the wall-plug just removing a toasty brown waffle. The waffle iron was returned to its home the next day, and Pearl transferred to another floor, far from the temptation of childish delights.

Pearl's feet always ached, but she was never too tired to tell another story. She lived within walking distance of the hospital, and although it was plain to see that she was a fearless Irish creature, the hospital neighborhood created the perfect setting for a murder. She walked home, she told us easily, down the middle of the dark street, and wasn't one bit frightened since her son kept watch for her from their fourth-floor apartment window. In the case of a crisis, we pictured him parachuting to the aid of his mother from the fourth floor window.

Some enemy-alien housing project had dedicated the top floors of Pearl's apartment building to the Japanese. She didn't really believe that the Japanese had the fortitude to commit mayhem on foreign soil but anyway, when she saw

one on the stairs behind her, she would bow politely out of the way and say,

"I prefer you to walk in front of me!"

When Pearl was off-duty we were graced with the presence of Charley, whom we called with the greatest of affection, "Our disorderly orderly." He gained that name only because he didn't conform to the usual pattern of other orderlies we had met.

Charley was an old sea-dog with a real hones-'to-goodness tatooed serpent to prove it. He was a Britisher with a fascinating cockney that had a noble twang. He had been all the way around the world, and back again, and although he never talked about himself, he had the most spectacular knowledge of the classics and at times quoted for almost an hour from *Paradise Lost.* But he knew about other things too, and on one occasion we lost his company for a rather kind word someone had dropped about Karl Marx.

Concretely, there were only two things that Charley didn't have: a wife, and an upper plate. Otherwise he lacked nothing. He had a most charming way of complimenting a lady, he had a marvelous sense of humor, and besides having one of the largest sized hearts he was an unmatched born actor. Charley could, and often did, re-dramatize anything from the battle scene from *All Quiet on the Western Front* to *Willie the Woim.* We all found that we could be gray and green with yellow spots all over, and Charley would come into the room, stop and gasp like a Barrymore, and say in his irresistible cockney: "Is that you! I simply cawn't believe it! You look so much better today than you did yesterday! Your eyes are just shooting stars!" Even though we didn't quite believe him, we took another look into our mirrors after he had gone, and would confidently call the mirror a liar to its face.

Although Charley's day ended at four in the afternoon, he

was very often around until eight or later, just passing out bags of potato chips or asking if anyone would like him to run down to the corner for a hamburger. When one of us was particularly ill, he would sit by our beds and quote from the Bible or another patient book. If he thought the illness was psychological, he would go into a "Willie the Woim."

If the reward in Heaven is given in accordance with the love of the work we spend most time in, Pearl and Charley will hold high offices for a long time running.

CHAPTER VI

Holidays—One! Two!! Three!!!

THE day that Lenore left me for another hospital marked the closing of my only-child habit of living-alone-and-liking-it. Almost two months had passed since that day. From a snooty isolationist, I had been transformed into a life-time-member of the Herd. There was no substitute for socializing. I knew that now even though there were times of each day and of each evening that solitude was essential to sanity, for reading, for writing, and for the arithmetic of the intricate physio-therapy exercises, the times in between were just wasted living unless the lives and the words of others could be shared.

A week before Thanksgiving Barbara was told that she would be discharged and ready to go home for the holiday. The news cheered us both for a time, and yet somehow, we had grown so close that separation was painful. I miserably resigned myself to the fact that no one could ever take Barbara's place as a roommate. She had been the last of four good roommates— Lissa, Lenore, Chrysanthemum and now Barbara. I knew that to expect further good fortune in the introduction of another living companion was useless. There was only one solution—I would just have to concentrate harder

on getting well so that I would be able to get out of the hospital by Christmas.

But Barbara left on Tuesday, and I found myself in a hatefully exclusive room once more. The evening of her departure was tearful, and even Jack and Jay joined in with sentimental goodbyes. They promised to make up for her presence, and since they too had recovered sufficiently to get about in wheel chairs, we spent the evening playing cards in my room. When they retired they knocked their good-nights at our mutual wall, so I felt a little less alone.

Thanksgiving Day arrived. I awoke alone in my room before the seven o'clock nurse came in. I muttered to myself, "It's just another Thursday, it's just another Thursday!"

Since it was a holiday, there were no hot-packs to look forward to. When Jack and Jay awoke they knocked their good-morning on the wall, and called me on the telephone to say that they would have their Thanksgiving dinner in my room. None of us had had to face the added strain of spending a festive day in an "institution" before, and we all felt the invisible shroud of impersonality around us. There was no unusual bustling about in the kitchen, and no odors of roasting turkey or pumpkin pie coming over our room doors. It was just another day as far as the hospital was concerned, and everywhere the surroundings seemed to say, "This is no home of any sort—you are only here because you're ill. When you leave, more ill people will take your place. You are no one special in this house."

There was no chapel to go to to say our prayers, or no hymns in praise of the harvest. It was just another day.

After breakfast, the head day-nurse came in to explain to me that Jack and Jay certainly could not have their dinner in my room, nor could I in theirs. "Let's not fool around with more of this childishness," she said. "Just eat what's on

your tray and stop breaking up the routine of this floor."

Jack and Jay and I discussed this after we were up in our wheel-chairs after breakfast, and decided that she should not have her way. A party that day was more than essential to us. Besides, we were saying in words that we didn't say, "We mustn't remember where we are today, or what has happened to us."

Anyway, we couldn't be expelled, so we harshly broke the strict rule, and when the trays were passed to the rooms, Jack and Jay rolled in with their dinners on their laps. Besides, the head day-nurse had just left to have her own dinner, and we knew we would be undisturbed for an hour.

The Thanksgiving dinner amazed us. The roasted cold-storage turkey with the red bones was extremely good, and there was a homey sage dressing inside of it. Our napkins had big brown gobblers printed on them and stuck festively into the pumpkin pie was a fat, double picture of another turkey pasted on a toothpick. The dietician came in personally, and gave us each a big glass of cream instead of the usual milk, and after the feast we sleepily parted and rolled fatly into our beds.

At two o'clock, Mother and Daddy arrived. They had not missed coming to the hospital for one day in all the time I had been there. Mother was beaming, and although she wore a new purple holiday-dress and a lovely pink felt hat with purple jewels on it, her face was rosy and flushed, and I felt as if she had come into the dining room right from the fragrant kitchen. Daddy followed and instead of the usual small bundle of new pajamas or amber asters, he carried our old familiar picnic basket. "We're going to have our Thanksgiving dinner with you," he said.

Mother removed her fur coat that smelled of the crisp, fresh out-doors, and cleared the magazine table of the flowers and

books. She spread it with a cream-colored linen cloth and set three places with the china and silver from home. In the center of the table she put a yellow grapefruit porcupined with colored toothpicks that held dates on the bottom layer, and black plum-sized olives over all the rest. From our old, chipped *casuela,* she served a tossed salad complete with capers and my favorite raw cauliflower. From the thermos bottle she poured my favorite vegetable soup—and as at home, I rated the marrow-bone. Everything was complete. Fried chicken, mashed potatoes and for dessert, cherry tarts, topped with whipped cream. Even the orange-colored nut cups held pistachios and cashews, so that there was nothing on the table which I didn't like best.

I made a grand gesture of eating, but I was so pokey with my swallowing, that everything turned cold and different while it lingered on my plate. My parents kept pace with my mouthfuls, though, keeping the conversation flowing while they pretended that I ate no more slowly than I ever had. I did the best I could, although the considerate portions which were allotted to my plate were a mere suggestion of the size of meals I had always been able to eat before. Then too, the noon-time turkey and the glass of cream had already used up a goodly piece of my capacity.

"Mrs. Mickelson sent you a cake," Mother said, and when I lifted the cover of a large square white box, I saw an enormous angel-food staggering under the depths of chocolate-fudge frosting. That would be for tomorrow.

But all the holiday festivity was not contained in the food, for I had another surprise. The doctor had promised my parents that they might take me out-of-doors that afternoon, if the sun was shining. Father told me about it after mother had put the remains of the feast back into the picnic basket. And joy of joys, the sun was shining brightly!

"Outdoors" meant the terrace which ran across the front of the hospital on my floor. Mother dressed me in two pairs of flannel pajamas, a quilted bed-jacket and my warmer housecoat. Then wrapping all of me into one of the woolly camel-hair blankets, and pinning it securely over my head and under my chin, she and Father wheeled me to the end of the corridor and onto the terrace.

Perhaps the wind wasn't as blustery as it seemed, but even if it were gentle, it took my breath away completely. This was a real holiday, and I was almost exploding with joyous emotion. This was my first breath of the outside since the rainy day I had arrived at the hospital, and although the sun stayed but a minute, the world had never looked so beautiful. The lake was a dull brown-gray, and immediately below the terrace ran four or five sets of tracks from the Illinois Central railroad. The streamliners looked beautiful as they streaked by in orange, green, or silver flashes. Some were going North, and I pictured their stations; some were going South, just as I had gone on these very tracks many times before. Even though it was a holiday, the trains looked full of business, for most of them were filled with soldiers and sailors. Some of the motormen waved to us from the station-house below. Then I saw a train-full of sailors. They were going more slowly and I could see some of them look up to the terrace. I wondered if any who looked knew about hospitals as intimately as we three did. It was so thrilling that I found my excitement prevented me from breathing very well; too, my heart was rolling around my ribs like a tumble-weed. See how nice it is, my parents were saying, it's all telling you to come on out—the world is fine.

I wanted to go out—out there where I saw the skyline of Chicago against the misty November blue. I wanted to rush back inside the hospital and finish polio as I had finished the

cherry tart. I looked at the shiny automobiles smoothly covering the distances from one destination to another, and I knew from that moment that not for the toughest virus in the world would I give up all the fun and living that lay waiting outside for me.

I felt so especially refreshed when we returned to the room that I had another cherry tart, and in about fifteen minutes I became violently ill. It was quite a day, and I hadn't seemed to miss a thing even to the usual after effects of Thanksgiving over-indulgence. We spent the rest of the afternoon and early evening in a quiet snooze. Mother fell asleep on the chair she had placed next to my bed while she held my hand, and Father in the big brown leather chair by the singing radiator.

By eight o'clock that evening I had quite revived, and Jay and Jack came to see me. They solemnly bore a lovely, long-stemmed rose in a coca-cola bottle, for they had heard of my after-dinner disaster. I smiled at their gift, and wondered which of the patients along our corridor would have an eleven-rose dozen when the vase was returned to her room in the morning.

"What's in the big white box?" Jay asked innocently.

"Don't," I scowled, "and please take it with you when you go!"

Some of the nurses who had seen the family party in my room on Thanksgiving thought it was lovely, and some teased me for being a pampered child. However, I felt that it was the smartest working of strategic psychology I had yet been exposed to. There was my goal, set on cream-colored linen before me—and no pep-talk could have done more for a team of backward muscles. Two of the nurses added it up as something more to report to the psychiatrist, so I knew that for a few days at least I had better not deviate from the normal.

On the evening after Thanksgiving, however, our night-nurse came in to dramatize a kind of hallucination-spell one of her patients was having. "She sees little green men on the window-sill," she said. She swung open the door to leave and then I thought she changed her mind to re-enter instead, so I closed my eyes quickly, lay flat on my back, and pointing solemnly to the window, said weirdly, "There's a fat, chartreuse man with two tails sitting on my window-sill," and when I opened my eyes to laugh with the nurse, I saw instead a little dark negro girl with widest, whitest eyes I have ever seen. She was delivering two bottles of coca-cola, but she dropped them on my bed and ran out of the room with shriek. Before I sat up in bed again, I said a very urgent prayer that asked her not to tell the night-supervisor about what had happened to her in Room 456!

On Saturday, I got a new roommate. I eyed her suspiciously, but suddenly discovered that she was doing the same to me, and we both had to laugh.

My new roommate was a woman of my own mother's age, and had come for a minor operation. Her daughter was a graduate nurse, and spent her time with her mother. The three of us made a nice, homey circle, and all three of us crocheted Christmas-gift fascinators together. We chatted night and day about the kind of things all women talk about. The new patient created only one minor disturbance, and that was when she was coming out of her operative anaesthesia, she kept calling in a distant kind of a voice—"Oooh, catch my nail polish—it's falling off my toes!"

On the day my "mother-roommate" left the hospital, we heard that there was an important visitor at Michael Reese. When the doctors made their early-morning call, they told us that Sister Elizabeth Kenny was viewing the children polios in Sarah Morris hospital, and that, if her schedule permitted,

she would be around to see us too. We were all very anxious to have her come, and kept the telephones buzzing from polio room to polio room to see whether she had yet been there.

But at one o'clock that afternoon, we heard that she had departed without coming to our section, and all we knew of her proximity was that she was wearing a black dress, a black hat, black shoes, stockings and spats, and an orchid.

At this time, just after Thanksgiving, I was busying myself with some definite writing assignments. I was preparing an article about poliomyelitis for the Chicago Daily Times. It was called "Remember Me," and I was telling about my experiences in the new polio world. The words came easily, for there was so much to tell, and the newspaper sent me in advance a small check which made the coming Christmas season a holiday really to look forward to. Now I knew that I could take part in it, and I sent out my friends to select a plaid wool shirt for Father, and a bright woolen dress for Mother. They shopped exquisitely and for three weeks before Christmas I had the gifts hidden on the top of the clothes closet shelf.

I was working furiously in between times to finish the ten fascinators for my friends, and the wooden beaded trims became more and more "artistic". No two were alike, and when I ran out of the wooden beads I decorated the white woolen ones with silver and gold bangles. The finished products were truly wonderful, and Christmas seemed as exciting as it ever was before.

My roommate now, Number Six, was a charming elderly Finnish woman. How she managed to pass successfully through her serious operation and convalescent period is really a wonder, for the activity in our room was never greater. Besides the long hours that I kept the lamp on while I finished the fascinators, there was frequently the click-clack of my

portable typewriter whipping up new copies and dozens of changes on the newspaper article. She was utterly uncomplaining though, and when she got a little better, she entertained me with fascinating stories of her picturesque girlhood in Finland. Her accent was delightful, and I thrilled at her tales about Sibelius, whose neighbor she had been. Her son was a naval officer on a P.T. boat in the Caribbean, and she read to me snatches from his romantic letters about Rio and Trinidad. His mother could not understand why he hadn't taken his violin with him, since he was so fond of music and wrote frequently about the native concerts he heard in port. I smiled as I realized that mothers probably could not understand that shipmates on a P.T. boat had little time to listen to, or to give violin concerts!

The pre-Christmas thrills were many. Jay showed me one evening some photographs of the molded paper maché mannequins which his store was going to use in its Christmas windows. The mannequins were truly adorable with plump, smiling faces, and bodies bending with verve—even in the photographs they looked as though they were just caught moving about. Jay planned for the Christmas windows in his store to portray the Christmas Season in the American home, from 1860 to 1943. I was so enthusiastic about the idea and the way he planned to execute it that he invited me to help with the project.

The State Street Christmas windows in Chicago's Loop are a real high-light of the season, and families frequently make special excursions downtown just to see them, so I was very flattered to be able to have a finger in one of the most attractive displays of all. My assignment was to write a Christmas story for each of the six windows. Each story would be lettered on a gold scroll and held near the front of the window by fat, beautiful cherubims. The job was such fun that I spread

it thinly over three evenings, and from the first word I wrote I knew that the Christmas spirit had moved into my room to stay.

The stories turned out well, and although neither Jay nor I could leave the hospital to see our handiwork, a photographer from his store took pictures of them for us to see. The photographs looked more beautiful than Jay's sketches; they also showed people gazing intently at the windows and the words on the scrolls. We wondered what these people would think if they knew where the ideas for them had originated.

Except for two slight upsets, I felt that my work on display on State Street was a huge success. For one thing, an anonymous person telephoned to me and said: "I don't want to frighten you, but I heard that you wrote the stories for those Christmas windows downtown. In the 1860 window, you mentioned *Silent Night, Holy Night,* and *Silent Night, Holy Night* wasn't composed until 1861!" The reporter turned out to be wrong, but for a warm half-hour while the Chicago Tribune hunted the date of the song, I died a thousand deaths. I was sure that *Silent Night, Holy Night* had been sung almost forever, but even 1861 was a long time ago!

The second warning turned out to be more of a real faux pas, for a race-conscious individual stormed Jay's display office at the store with a petition bearing a lot of names. It seemed that in the Old South window I had said, "Can't you almost hear the darkies singin' *Away in the Manger,*" and by so doing had been brutal to my dark brother. In the good will of the season, the artist removed the scroll from the window, turpentined-out the word "darkies" and squeezed in its place the word "children."

On the tenth day of December, something really spectacular happened. At the time that Barbara left, I had been determined to get well by Christmas so that I could go home to

stay. Muscles though, are very stubborn objects, and I soon discovered that I had set my last time-limit. The physiotherapist had tried on an occasion or two to make me stand, but the licorice whip-legs still remained, and I could not go home until they became stronger. I bravely faced the prospects of spending Christmas Day as I had spent Thanksgiving Day, and I tried to think no further about it.

But on the tenth, my doctor came in to pay his morning call and said casually, "How would you like to go home for Christmas?"

I think I was too thrilled to speak, but he knew the answer anyway. I was to go home on the twenty-second and return on the twenty-seventh which meant that my holiday at home would be five days long. I was so occupied with the dream of returning home, that for almost two weeks I didn't feel a single butterfly when the tall, dark, quiet, disconcerting interne who looked like Count Vronsky, took my pulse.

About a week before it was time to go, I developed a disgusting sore throat. I knew that if it should stop me from eating, my holiday would be called off, so I bribed my Finnish roommate to help me with my salads and throw what was left of my daily cream-soups down the drain. My throat divulged itself, however, when my temperature went up a few too many degrees. Even though I submitted to hazardous swabbings, I finally convinced the doctors that I had run merely an excitement fever.

And now the little Finnish lady had more to put up with than ever, for I had to describe every room in my home and all of its furnishings to her. I'd ruin our appetites for hospital food completely as I'd describe some of Mother's best culinary achievements. She retaliated with recipes of her own, and we suffered no end with the hospital fare.

The day to go home finally arrived. I had spent the night

before in Jay's room wrapping the fascinators and mother's dress and father's shirt in beauteous papers and wide ribbons which Jay's friends from the display department had brought to us. There were pink-paper packages with purple gauze ribbons, chartreuse with gold, navy blue with kelly green, and bright cerise with a silver-dotted, pale blue ribbon. I also left some presents at the hospital for the packers and the physiotherapist. For my polio friends, I had ordered large bars of scented soap in geranium or lilac or carnation essences to take the place of the strong white soap we used everyday.

But now it was the twenty-second of December, and at seven o'clock in the morning the little Finnish lady tiptoed to my bed and said, "Vake up Dolink. Today iss here at last. I vant you to take your path now, so you von't catch cold ven you go out."

She helped me all morning, and made me re-do my hair and even put some of her own rouge on my cheeks.

"You vant plenty of color ven you go home," she said, "because it vill make your mamma feel so much petter."

I was to go home at ten o'clock in an ambulance as I still was not well-enough to sit up for the three-quarter of an hour ride.

Ten o'clock finally arrived. The nurse rushed out to get me a wheelchair to take me down to the ambulance cart, and the little Finnish lady was in the closet making sure that I hadn't left any of the Christmas gifts. The nurse rushed in with the wheelchair, slammed the door of the tiny closet, and I barely had time to gasp "My roommate—my roommate's in there!" before she whisked me out.

The out-of-doors which I hadn't seen since Thanksgiving Day was overwhelming. The sun shone brilliantly, and there were patches of white snow on the parkways. The ambulance was not the same one which brought me to the hospital, a fact

for which I was thankful. This one looked almost new; it was long and maroon-colored, and beautifully upholstered inside. Father made the trip in the ambulance to accompany me home, and was staggered by the sight of my stack of Christmas gifts. Then we turned the familiar street and stopped before the doorway I hadn't seen in more than three months. Everything at once became beyond description—the trip up the stairs, the poinsettias in the hallway, the tree in the parlor!

The men from the ambulance transferred me from the stretcher to the long sofa, and when they left I could say nothing. I was at home—I could smell its familiarity. Everything around me entered my skin rather than my eyes, and I prickled all over. In the usual corner was a big, furry Christmas tree with the colored tin-foil paillettes that I had purchased the year before. The red and green lights were sparkling for my homecoming, and here and there where a pailette touched the warm globe, it spun gently around. It had been so long since I had seen rugs on the floor that they were the most fascinating accessories. Compared with the hard, mottled marble floors in the hospital, these soft, cushiony-looking coverings made walking appear as simple as lying down. I saw the wallpaper, the tree, the rugs, and the chairs, and I smelled gingerbread in the oven. All of these things surrounded me at once, so that in spite of being bewilderingly happy, I found something to cry about.

I spent most of the days on the sofa in the room with the Christmas tree, entertaining from my couch like a Tolstoy princess. Mother thought the soft, downy sofa would be quite a treat after the stiff Kenny bed, but I soon found that its soft pushiness made me feel entirely out-of-line and quite miserable. Father made it nice and hard and comfortable again, by inserting an ironing board under the big cushions.

The telephone rang in continual merriment, and although

my guest-list was restricted, I saw a lot of people who made me feel as good as new.

On the afternoon of December 24, the minister came to visit, and we had such a good time that suddenly he dropped a little gingerbread cake on his tea-plate and said, "Oh, my goodness, I'm very late!"—and grabbing his hat and valise, he rushed out the front door. It was probably the first time that a minister hadn't shown up for a wedding!

On Christmas eve, when Mother was in her room, and Father was getting some wine glasses out of the china cabinet, I gripped the arms of my wheel chair and pushed myself into a standing position. Although the therapist had tried to stand me once or twice before, I hadn't been able to do it on my own power, and she had always been right alongside of me to lend her support. No one who has never known the inability to walk could appreciate the thrill of rising from a chair and standing up straight. I hardly breathed, and I didn't dare so much as turn my head—for although I felt the firm floor beneath my feet, my legs were still the licorice whips.

While everyone was at church on Christmas morning, I wheeled my chair to my old bedroom. The door made a cracking noise when I opened it and a blast of cold air rushed out. The room had been scoured and scrubbed when I left, and had evidently not been opened for months. The pictures on the wall looked like old friends I hadn't even remembered for a long time. I opened up the book case and a letter fell out—it was a Special Delivery and it was post-marked September 7th. I ran my fingers over the rows of books and selected two Spanish grammars and the Spanish-English dictionary to take back with me. I closed the book case doors and began to wheel to the dresser, when the bookcase door banged open against the wheel of my chair. I got a funny electric feeling as I remembered just how many times before

the door had opened in just the same way, all the times I was hurrying to get ready for work when it would open just as unsuspectingly, and I'd catch my dress on the lock, and all the pairs of hose I had snagged on it, as I was rushing out for an evening of fun. I leaned over and closed the door very carefully now, so that it would not open that way again.

I took my jewelry box from the dressing table and tried on various combinations of bracelets and rings; finally I put them all away except the two I had missed so much when I first came to the hospital. I turned around and looked at the bed. Its dark green satin back was covered with a green and white checked flannel blanket, but the spread with its bouquets of bright red roses looked as lovely as the first day I saw it. I laughed as I remembered how often I lamented the hard mattress on this French antique, and yet when I compared it to the Kenny bed it seemed as soft as sea-foam!

I wheeled over to the closet and opened the door. I blinked hard and giggled as its "shocking pink" color blazed out at me. I looked at the row of artistic zig-zag and polka dotted pink and black hat-boxes which I had painted myself two summers before. On the back of the door were two shoe bags filled with fourteen pairs of high-heeled shoes, and my old shower clogs worn quite thin. I couldn't reach the top row of pockets; there carefully wrapped in black tissue were the red satin sandals with the shiny red and gold stones, and the black velvet ones with the gold kid heels that had taken me from hop to hop all through my college days. But down around the middle were my blue shoes, and the brown patent leather ones, and the black suedes—all with the highest heels I could find in Chicago or New York. I had been so vain about pretty high heeled shoes! I slipped the blanket off my knees and took off my heavy white woolen socks and tried on the brown patent leather pumps. They were terribly cold inside, and when I

put my feet gently on the floor, and felt my ankles fall silently over, I got a funny feeling in the pit of my stomach. I took them off and put them away.

When I was bundled up in my wool socks and blanket again, I reached for my riding-crop hanging on a low hook and coaxed down two of the hat boxes. I hurriedly untied the black tape on the first box and lifted the tissue. There was the black satin sailor with two pink roses front center, and a lot of pink frou-frou veiling to tie under my chin. I giggled again as I always did when I remembered the woman who had stopped before a table when I was dining with a friend in the Palmer House.

"Herman, look!" she said, pointing directly at my hat! And they both laughed very hard. It was much funnier ever after than it was the evening it happened!

The second box was very big, and I remembered the day I added it to my closet. It was very warm and mid-June. I had spent a whole morning and part of the afternoon shopping for two wash-dresses and a pair of tennis shoes. Just before going home I wandered into the French room at Marshall Field's, and I saw a big, navy blue hat sitting on pedestal. I walked up to it, and then slowly all around it. A voice behind me said, "Would you like to try it on?"

"Why, yes," I said. And after I saw it again in the mirror, "How much is it?"

The saleswoman took it off my head and hunted for the tag a little disdainfully as she might hunt through a scrap-bag.

"Twenty-two ninety-five," she said coolly.

I opened my hand-bag. "Will two dollars and thirty five cents hold it for me for an hour?"—I was breathing quickly.

"Two dollars will be sufficient," she said.

I didn't wait for a receipt. I rushed back to the two other stores and returned the dresses I had just bought. I didn't

have to be careful how I held the box on my way home on the "L" for it said Marshall Field and Company, French Room on both sides.

I tried it on now. It even looked good with a red and white striped housecoat.

But the reminiscences had been fun, and the life I lived before looked tempting. I took another memorizing look at the room and knew that I would be inhabiting it again one day, although I didn't know how soon.

For Christmas dinner I had the big, porterhouse steak which our meat market had sent as a welcome home gift to me. It was all wrapped in red waxed-paper and cellophane, and had sprigs of holly stuck into it.

That afternoon my father brought home one of the garage dog's latest litter.

"This," he said, "is the deluxe model—black body with four white-walled tires."

And sure enough, the fat puppy was all black and in perfect order, each of the four toes on his four little paws was neatly done in white. Nothing can quite match the joy of watching a new puppy. My holiday was complete! All over the world boys and girls had dreamed of being home for Christmas—and there I was!

When I was waiting for the ambulance to take me back to the hospital, Mother said, "Well, dear, it's all over—and so soon! Don't you wish it were just beginning?"

"No," I said, "I'm very glad that it's over, and I'm very anxious to get back. I shall never come home like this again. Next time I'll walk!"

I returned to the hospital in the same beautiful maroon ambulance, and all my friends were waiting for the exciting tales I would bring from home. When I returned to my room, I discovered that another nice little gray haired lady had been

moved in the bed next to mine. She was quite ill, for she hardly turned to see me when I entered; she also refused the telephone call that had come for her.

"If you don't feel well," I said, all helping hands, "maybe there is something I could do. Are you supposed to take one of these little pills?" I reached for a small jar of irregular black pills that stood near the telephone.

"Pills?" she laughed feebly. "Those are why I don't feel well. I'm going to take them home with me. Those are my gall stones—35!"

My hand with the jar in it froze in mid-air, and I swallowed very hard as I put it in a far-shaded corner beyond my normal view.

The old year had just two more days of life, and although it would be the first one any of us had ended in a hospital, we became very nonchalant about it, and even began to call Michael Reese "Mike's Place."

"If it's called Mike's Place" laughed Henrietta, "it sounds like a good place for a New Year's Eve party!"

So we began to plan one. Like all parties, it had a future, a beginning and an end.

Mother brought a huge wooden platter filled with her fanciest hors d'oeuvres—complete with caviar and paté de foie gras. Charley brought ginger-ale and potato chips, and one of Jay's friends contributed a bottle of "53, G.H. Mumm & Co." champagne which he brought to the hospital beautifully camouflaged in a red-flannel stocking tied with a green bow and a twig of holly. The director of the Occupational Therapy project loaned us the portable electric phonograph from the recreation room. Since my roommate was still ill, the party was held in Jay's room, and Violet, Lissa, Henrietta, Jack, Jay and I crowded into it in our wheel chairs. We listened to the complete record album of *Oklahoma!* and

another of *Scheherazade.* Pearl came in at ten-thirty with a plate of sandwiches and our party was extremely gay. Jack hopped out of bed and showed us some of the more intricate jitterbug routines, as he hung onto the Kenny footboard of his bed and rhythmically swung about on his one good leg. Throughout the evening, the clerks downstairs who had heard about our party allowed our friends to come up to visit. So many dropped in that at one point in the evening there were fifteen people in the crowded little room. The nurses were kind, and although other patients on the floor must have complained about the hilarity, we were not reprimanded. It was fun to see some of the guests in dazzling evening clothes and paper hats, and others in their nighties. One sober-faced guest who stayed until midnight feared that he would not be able to convince his wife that he had come late to his own party because he had been in the hospital visiting a sick friend. We gave him a hand-towel with Michael Reese Hospital stamped convincingly at either end, and all wrote messages on it begging forgiveness from his wife.

At midnight, we opened a jar of herrings and all sampled at least one so that our health and good fortune would be insured in the coming year. The champagne was saved for ringing in the new year, and we divided it into our five glasses —which gave each of us a generous share. We toasted each other highly, and sang Auld Lang Syne. We threw open the window and hooted cheers to all the world, and then kissed each other—leaning as best we could, from chair to chair.

It was a magnificent party. We all rolled back to our beds at twelve-thirty, utterly exhausted from our first party. Jay telephoned me the next morning to say he had dreamed he walked all the way down the hall to the drinking fountain. He said that in his dream he realized he could not walk, but he was too thirsty from the champagne to care.

CHAPTER VII

A Quiet Evening at Home

BUT soon the holidays were over, and the most exciting news I had to tell my physio-therapist was that while I had been at home I had pushed myself up from my wheel chair and had been able to stand for a few seconds.

"I was sure you would be confident and strong enough to try it soon," she smiled, so we set to work in earnest.

"Standing me" consisted of rolling me off the physio-therapy table in the gymnasium and in some manner keeping my knees from sinking forward. At first, the standing sensation made me feel like a baton which had just gone over a goal post. I felt giddy and all I could do was jitter and giggle. Little pains began to shoot here and there—in my nearly-recovered shoulder, which felt as if it were falling from its socket, in my stringy, weak back, and up and down my straining legs. Each day I seemed to be able to devise a dozen different excuses for postponing the devilish exercise and Heaven itself appeared to me every time I was rolled back onto the table.

The excuses were logical enough—dizziness or a description of the whirling pains; but one day I discovered that by using them, I was cutting my standing-time to a very few

seconds. Visions of the trains or my wonderful hat-boxes began to cross my mind more frequently, and the exercise which I would have relished postponing till tomorrow or tomorrow, became more important than the excuses to avoid it. Sometimes I would get them half-way said anyway, and then I'd change my mind and decide to hold back the eager knees for another second or two. A glimpse of my vertical figure in the gymnasium mirrors convinced me that muscles and curves were not acquired by lying down, so I tried a little harder just for the sake of vanity.

Standing upright was indubitably a frightening experience that seemed to open all sorts of horrible new channels of fear, and I began to dread the daily exercises that I had heretofore liked best of all my day's occupations. Seeing objects from a vertical position was confusing, and I felt at least ten feet tall. I resembled a two-legged caterpillar, and imagined I must feel exactly like one who had been forced to go through life walking on his two hind legs. Standing was such a tremendous exercise that I would break out in profuse perspiration and turn a deep purple color from my head to my toes, and after just a few seconds I'd begin to puff like an old war-horse just out of battle.

"Come now," the therapist would lie beautifully, "you stood for twenty seconds longer yesterday," and I almost collapsed as I remembered standing for almost three hours talking to a boy who had carried my books home for me from high school. Twenty seconds! I felt as though I had been there twenty years! But in this manner my therapist increased my standing time, my confidence, and my strength. And I seriously realized that unless I tried harder, tomorrow would be no different from today, and I tried to do just a little better than I was asked to do.

After more than a week of just standing, I was once again

introduced to walking. In a flash I remembered how I silently ridiculed Barbara's snail's pace, and now I couldn't even match it. With my doctor supporting my left arm and my physio-therapist the right, I had to be told to bring one leg forward, place it squarely on the floor, leave it there, and then begin to think about bringing the other leg forward. Somehow it seemed that I never knew just exactly how walking was done, and unless I willed the direction of each foot conscientiously, I seemed to unconsciously, want to bring both feet forward at the same time. Looking at myself in the facing mirror, I resembled a chorus girl being escorted home from an early morning party, and even my vocabulary was appropriate to the occasion. Each time a knee buckled or an ankle turned, I hiccupped a "Whoops!" and tried again.

The doctor and the therapist were persistent, as if I were the only patient either of them had, and although I was a long way from walking down the stairs with an encyclopedia on my head, inside of three weeks' time I exchanged the doctor and the therapist for a pair of crutches. Soon she let me try them out on the length of the gymnasium alone, following me closely, lest I try to move all four appendages at one time as I seemed so prone to do. I made use of her on several slippery occasions. I had learned seriously that even not-walking was a habit I could break only by substituting walking! By the last week in January I was ready for a public appearance.

A group of high-ranking medical men were at that time touring the United States regarding all the most-serious infantile paralysis cases which were left-over from the summer of the bad epidemic. In the group were some of the most famous orthopedic surgeons and correlating specialists in the United States and Europe.

Lissa, Violet and I were the three selected from Michael Reese hospital and cheerfully introduced to the conclave as

the "three worst cases of the past season, and probably the three worst in Chicago." The three of us had been warned a few days in advance. On the evening before we thought of wearing red, white, and blue costumes and singing in harmony as we entered "We did it before, and we can do it again!" At any rate, we did not regard the convention seriously.

But when we were rolled into the gymnasium and saw the group of men there, the joke took on a more serious aspect. Some of the doctors wore their long white coats, and some had their stethoscopes around their necks. One gentlemen in the group sported the inevitable goatee.

Lissa and Violet were presented first since they had both been in respirators. Their first involvements were read off a chart, and their progress shown.

By the time my turn had come around I had developed a kind of stage fright, for in the group I had spotted the handsome interne, who had as yet not seen me perform, neither had he ever seen me in my unflattering walking suit. My little act consisted of getting off the hospital cart unaided, reaching for my crutches, and then walking between the double line of them while they indicated my muscles with the cold, disturbing leads of their pencils. I was more interested in what they thought of me personally and paid little attention to their comments. I wondered if I looked like the kind of woman who paid twenty-two ninety-five for her hats in the French Room at Marshall Field and Company.

But when I looked at myself in the mirror and discovered that I still looked like a negative advertisement for vitamin tablets and caught the tilted head of Count Vronsky staring at my shapeless gastrocnemius, I had all I could do to keep upright. I really walked very badly and made a poor showing for my physio-therapist who was exceptionally proud of the work we had done together. Only about four of the twenty or

more steps I took were any indication of the best I could do. My physio-therapist helped me back to the cart while my doctor explained the strange combination of the two kinds of poliomyelitis which I had had.

Suddenly, as I was ready to get back on top the cart, I heard a loud-voiced doctor say, "Why isn't that girl wearing braces? She's hyper-extending as bad as any I've seen." (Hyper-extending meant snapping my knees back at the end of each step to keep myself from buckling. It did not make a pretty gait.) I jerked my head around to look at the man and expected to see him wearing a flowing moustache and a dagger between his teeth. I began to quiver and shake and couldn't even get back onto the cart without the assistance of my therapist. It had never occurred to me that I might need a brace and the news gave me quite a jolt.

"Since we have followed the Kenny method with her all along," I heard my doctor say, "and since she has been walking for only about three weeks, we're going to give her a chance to try to get along without them."

"But she has involvement in both legs," the loud-voiced doctor continued, "and by allowing her to go on hyper-extending, you are destroying her chances of recovering a normal walk." And I heard him cite the fault of all the muscles my physio-therapist had called by the same names, so I knew he understood my affliction accurately.

"If she were my patient," he concluded, "she would be wearing two braces."

I leaned back hoping that his recommendations would be ineffectual.

As I sat there shaking all over from the revelation, a gentle, elderly doctor with a broad Viennese accent came up and spoke to me.

"I think you're doing splendidly," he whispered. "Doctors seldom agree."

"Thank you," I smiled, and his words helped remove the stinger. "I never dreamed that I would need anything but my two legs to walk with. I used to be a ballet dancer."

"If you don't think you need them," he encouraged, "then you won't. Just try a little harder to keep those knees where they belong, and you'll show a lot of doctors that sometimes a patient knows best."

"I'm a neurologist," he went on, "and I'm interested in other things about you. Why do you tremble so?"

"Fright," I said, "and excitement. I seem to be very emotional these days."

"Have you noticed your emotions more now that you have polio?"

When I told him that I did, he wrote it down in his notebook. He asked me whether there had been a Pelleas in my life, and whether I ever saw him now. I told him I had heard in December that Pelleas had been killed when the Marines landed at Tarawa.

"Just one more question," he said gently, and I noticed that he blushed a little. "How is your—ah—er—your stomach?" he asked.

"Just fine, thank you. I'm in perfect working order," and he patted my hand like a grandfather.

Another of the doctors told me that I spoke very clearly for a recent bulbar, and I told him about the vocal exercises of the musical scale and the alphabet that I was still religiously adhering to. He wrote that down in his notebook too, and finally the meeting was over.

The next day my physio-therapist carefully asked me what I had thought of the opinion ventured by the doctor who thought I ought to be braced. I told her that he hadn't frightened me, but I begged to be allowed to continue walking without them to prove to us all that I could do it best that

way. She consented and so instead of braces I was "measured" for my own pair of crutches.

They were called "Canadian crutches" and were different from any that I had seen before. Instead of the usual padded piece that fit under the walker's arm, Canadian crutches came to a few inches above the elbow. They were topped off with a circular leather band which slipped over my arm. The cross-bar that was the resting-place for my hands and the bottom section were the same as all other variety of crutches. This kind of crutch theoretically taught us to rely more on our legs for support and balance than the other kind, which gave support to the patient best when he was leaning all his weight on the under-arm pieces.

But now I had roommate Number Nine, a young married woman named Rosie who had the most contagious zest for life that I have ever seen. She followed a pleasant little girl who had just stayed overnight for a tonsilectomy. I never imagined that I could retain a good humor after being awakened at twelve o'clock midnight and two o'clock in the morning by a complete stranger, but Rosie was different! I think that even when she eventually resigned herself to sleep she mentally brushed her hands together and said, "Now that's that! Now I'll sleep for eight hours and twelve and a half minutes."

On her way to the operating room Rosie had kept up a constant conversation with the bewildered girl who wheeled her away. Rosie and the hypodermic needle which was to have put her to sleep a long while before just had no way of getting together. And even before she came into the room after her operation, I could hear her down the hall saying,

"Oh, dear, is it over already? I wanted to see what the operating room was like. I *would* have to fall asleep . . . " and on she went.

At twelve o'clock midnight and two o'clock in the morning Rosie was awakened to be given medications. This might have distempered anyone in the world but Rosie. Once awake she would say in a loud kind of whisper, "Are you asleep, Darling?" and before I could answer she would go on, "Because if you are, I won't disturb you, but if you aren't, I just remembered the cutest little story that I don't want to forget to tell you . . . . " And so it went for all of the seven days she was there.

The night before Rosie was to leave we decided that neither of us would live through the night if we couldn't have some real home-cooked hot-dogs. We had had the hospital variety for dinner, and they made us dreadfully homesick for the juicy kind which we insisted our own meat markets made.

By eight o'clock that evening Rosie telephoned to her husband and said, "Davey, Darling, I don't care how hard it is, we simply have to have them. Why don't you telephone Pete, and maybe he'll let you in the shop. And be sure to bring them already cooked!"

Davey was the ideal kind of husband. An abundance of his type would send the Lovelorn columnist right out of business. At nine-thirty a messenger-girl brought in a tubular package.

"It's from a gentleman downstairs, and I don't know what's in it, but it sho' am hot!"

Rosie and I squealed! It was a thermos bottle with six boiling-hot frankfurters, and we ate them all!

The day after Rosie left, Eva came. Eva! Blonde, beautiful, composed, intelligent! Eva—roommate Number Ten! Eva, whose blonde feather hair cut could be ruffled by absolutely nothing. A real kind of glamor-girl whom I regarded as a sweet but distant smoothie until the day when I quietly wheeled into our room and spied her madly swinging Adolph

by the tail. She swung him around her head in three complete circles and let him go with a whack against the facing wall. Adolph was a blue and white striped chambray dachshund, and a gift, of course, from the man in Eva's life, and poor Adolph's misfortune was a two-inch rent in his belly.

The bold glimpse that I stayed to view in Eva's private world led to the opening of the glutinous alliance of Eva and Noreen. I knew that when I would try to tell of her in the future, any description I might give her would be totally inadequate. Besides words, an exegesis would require the singular lift of her winged eyebrows, the way she tossed her head, and the flowing malarkey of her vocabulary that made Bernadine, the colored maid, say: "Hones' to goodness, Chile, yo is the divil hisself!"

Some doctors said that Eva was incurably ill of a malignant brain tumor—but then some doctors said that I would need two braces to walk.

Eva and I remained roommates for three long months. We coached each other in the kind of encouragements we each needed to live our new lives. Eva could walk but little, and since I had just begun to learn again, we spent thrilling evenings taking shaky steps from our beds to the closed room door without the aid of our prescribed crutches. She called me Stinky and I called her Luther Burbank, for there wasn't a shrub or tree or flower whose life-history Eva was not intimately acquainted with. When I would comment on the period of some building in the background of a magazine photograph, Eva would say,

"—And will you look at what they've done with gysophila and smilax—what an elegant way to treat petunias!" She adored petunias more than orchids. After we had turned out the lights to go to sleep we would plant victory gardens with alternate circles of flowers and vegetables. We would

collaborate on plans for a new house, I planning the architecture and she planning the shrubbery; and then we would argue violently about its furnishings or the decor of the cabañas.

I loved the stories of her childhood—her mother's efforts to teach her embroidery while Eva's merry eyes danced out the window, aching to help the hired man haul a wheelbarrow of cement to the barn, or just to get outside and dig up the dirt around the big blue spruce outside the front entrance to their home. I could see her, a sassy tow-head of seven, running out to the barn in the early morning to scratch Bessie's belly, comb out her bangs, and kiss her big cow face.

Bernadine, whom Eva loved to torment, was our favorite maid. She was as black as a blackout and usually had a black eye that somehow managed to show up anyway. She wore a wig that was held down by the top of a black cotton stocking, and when she stooped to clean under the furniture her wig often slipped forward on her forehead. She loved talk, especially about popular subjects like groundhogs or Florida fruit farms or religion. We loved to tease her, and since she was so credulous, to shock her!

One day Eva said, "Bernadine, do you know how to cure the drink habit?"

Bernadine stopped and holding her mop out from her in a statue-like position, she said, "Oh Lawdy, what does you ask that fer?"

"Well," tugged Eva, "my roommate drinks a big glass of whiskey before she goes to sleep at night, and I am afraid that she might fall out of bed and get hurt!"

"Tsk, tsk," Bernadine clicked, looking at me, "—sich a sweet-lookin' child!" And then thinking it over for a minute, she swung her words directly at Eva and said, "Ah don't even believe she knows what whiskey is. Ah thinks you is too mean to be her roommate!" I refused to meet Eva's glance,

but I knew that she was saying with her eyes, "Who is mean to whom?"

One day Bernadine was going to empty the ash-tray.

"Don't throw away my cigar," I said very seriously. Bernadine just stared at me for a second and then cautiously she wet the end of her finger and tested the ash-end of the cigar to see if it was hot. (My father had left it the night before.)

When the Hospital Monthly came out with a photograph of the maids' new recreation room and some of them sitting in it, Eva pointed to one and asked Bernadine if it was what she pictured.

"Why!" said Bernadine, very offended, "—Ah couldn't be so black nohow!"

Another day she shuffled into the room and said, "Say, do yo girls know how ah keeps mah figger?" Just like that! She went from subject to subject like a dictionary.

"How?" Eva and I shouted in unison.

"Ah exercises carefully after each meal," she said; then she promptly broke into the liveliest jig which bounced the vases on the tables and sent the curtains waving. Then puffing like a jitterbug, she picked up her mop and without a smile left the room.

All these episodes which left Eva and me laughing deliriously had happened before the Sunday morning of our facials.

My mother will not admit it but (like most women) she is easily led to spending money. Her complexion, exposed to nothing but soap and water and an occasional cream bath, is the kind fancy cosmetic ads promise.

"It is lovely, Emily," one of her friends told her, "but LaBelle Creampuff will add a Glow."

So in pursuit of a "Glow," bedecked in my last year's high corduroy boots, Mother plodded through the deep snow to

the Elevated station where Mae was waiting to take her to LaBelle Creampuff's new salon.

Mother came to see me that evening with her knitting bag filled with lotions, post and pre-creams, astringents, non-clog face powder, rouge in Natural Glow and a bottle of facial mask, spelled in French on Madame Creampuff's well-known curvaceous bottle. She was stuffed to the ears with high-pressured advertising tips, and I, tickled pink at her sparkling new discoveries of revitalization, basked in the sunshine of her newly-acquired "glow".

"This is just what you need, Dear," she said to me, "to get rid of that hospital-look!"

What with the Ozone lamp and twelve vitamin pills a day, the hospital look was non-existent. New roommates and internes alike greeted me with, "What the devil are you doing here—you don't look sick!"

But I had never had a facial, and since polio was making me overcome one aversion after another, I decided to let cosmetics in on the maybe-I-can-stand-you-after-all list.

Mother arrayed the bottles on my bedside table. Cleansing cream, *un,* let stand; cleansing cream, *deux,* wipe-off—astringent—.

"Now," said Mother triumphantly, as her deft fingers patted and lightly wiped. "Now the masque!"

The "masque" smelled like last year's glue and was a brilliant red color. Mother painted it on with a little brush with soft, silky hairs that tickled like flies as they slid over my barbaric face.

"You mustn't move a muscle," she warned, so I closed my eyes while the masque tugged and dug and pinched and itched. When I opened my eyes again the masque had dried. My Father had that humorous masculine-skeptic look in his eyes, and I forgetfully smiled wide. The masque cracked in twenty

million places and I looked like an old egg-white. Mother was furious and she kept repeating that she should have known better than to allow my father to stay in the room. Now I had pulled my muscles! But strangely enough I had to admit that the effect was certainly stimulating, and Eva insisted that a real "Glow" remained.

Sunday mornings were always quiet and since the newspapers didn't arrive until eleven, the morning dragged. The Sunday morning following my first facial I brought out the creams, *un et deux*, the astringent, and the masque. I was anxious for Eva to share the invigorating effects too so we both indulged in a facial. We asked the nurse to hang the handy "DO NOT ENTER, PATIENT BEING TREATED" sign on the door, and with the red masques on our faces, we lay on our backs and relaxed to Danny O'Neil and the music from the Great Lakes Glee Club. The masque was drying and pulling and stretching when suddenly the door opened! It was Bernadine! She saw our bright red faces on our stark white pillows and her eyes got enormous. No expression appeared on her face and neither Eva nor I moved. Then she put her mop against the wall, came over to my bed, and peered at me so closely that our noses almost rubbed. Eva giggled and so did I, and both our masques promptly cracked—our muscles had been pulled!

I sent the cosmetics home with Mother that afternoon. Beauty would have to wait until I became a civilian!

On the second week in January we heard that a new polio had just come to the hospital. Our doctors and nurses asked us to visit him and bring him into our circle.

By this time Henrietta, Lissa, Violet, Jack, Jay and I had become a rather smug, exclusive group; well enough acquainted to pass frank comments on each other's views or hair-dos. It took us a long week before we moved in a parade

down to the end of the corridor where the new boy was living.

After we saw him we were a little ashamed for having waited so long. Chip was utterly adorable, and the only drawback I found in him was that he was just seventeen years old. He looked like a tall dandelion, very blonde with a short, downy hair cut. He told us that his home was in a town about sixty miles from Chicago, and although he had been ill since the seventeenth of September, his illness had not been diagnosd as polio until he came to our hospital in January.

His only affliction, fortunately, was a slow limp, and because doctors had found it due to neuritis, rheumatic fever, and a dozen other ailments, he had already gone through various torturous treatments. He even endured the extraction of a perfectly sound eye-tooth which was thought to be a source of the infection; since the blank space had not yet been filled in with a false tooth, he went about grinning with his tongue turned over to cover the almost unnoticeable gap. Although he was four months behind in his treatments, he was starting in at the beginning with the hot packs and physiotherapy.

For the others of us, of course, the hot-packs continued in unfailing regularity, and five months of them had toughened our hides like that of the African Water Buffalo. The little red welts about which Chip complained seldom appeared on the rest of us, and we assumed that we were at last becoming steam-proof! Occasionally the hot-packs seemed monotonous, but they had really become a daily habit—like brushing our teeth.

As soon as my article had appeared in the newspaper in mid-January a lot of interesting things began to happen. First of all, I received dozens of fan letters. Mothers began to ask questions which my article hadn't answered; college girls sent me cards of cheer; a group of naval students at the

University of Chicago called me their "chin-up girl", and I received two proposals from bed-ridden, elderly men. Several of the letters came from other people who had infantile paralysis many years before, and I was asked to become a regular contributor to the monthly magazine for the disabled in Chicago. I suppose I should have been flattered by those kind words, but I then realized that I had slipped into a different group of society and I didn't like it. I was merely trying to win back my old place, and through my eagerness I had sidestepped it. I answered all the letters except the ones from the disabled and unfortunate readers, for I felt that we would all be much better off by trying to fit into the normal life of others rather than by segregating ourselves for the sake of sympathetic company. I was sure that a few harsh experiences with the completely well human being might hurt our feelings, but not our characters. In a week or so I found a rejection-slip from *The Reader's Digest* in my mail. "Goodness," I thought, "magazines are farther ahead of schedule than I thought. They used to wait at least until I had sent them an article before they returned the rejection slip." It seemed, however, that three different readers had sent my article to *The Reader's Digest,* and the editor returned them to me with his kind but firm letter.

Through this same newspaper article I became acquainted with the public relations director of the hospital. She was a vivacious young woman with a thorough advertising personality that made her open her heart wide to anyone who showed an interest in journalism. She made regular visits to my room and was there the day a publisher's agent invited me to write a book about the whole of my hospital life.

The public relations director was actually more thrilled about the prospects of a book than I, for it didn't seem to me that many people would be interested in our funny kind of

hospital life. Then, too, Jay and I were working on a children's book called "The Purple Violet Bonnet" that took up a great deal of our time, and most of our imagination. But the public relations director would not be discouraged and in order to get me near a daily typewriter, she hired me to write articles for the monthly hospital magazine called The Mirror.

Through her efforts and the kind cooperation of the board of directors, I became the proud possessor of my own key to her very swank and very private office. To this lovely sanctum, with various untrue excuses to the polio-circle who did not know of my occupations, I escaped for a few hours' work in the evening, Saturday afternoon and almost all of Sunday. And since my articles for The Mirror did not take up very much time, I found myself rolling a practice-sheet into the typewriter and beginning a story which I planned to call "Inspiration Incorporated." It was the story of a young woman, purely fictitious, in a hospital because she had infantile paralysis. I began my first chapter with the words: "Getting well is an inspiration."

I soon turned to the book as a sort of solace to my nasty reputation as a hospital viewer and reporter. It seemed that for a long time in a "tickler file" of the hospital monthly magazine, there lay a cherished project entitled, "What Makes My Day in the Hospital Happy," by an anonymous patient. Evidently the patient with just the right outlook had never been found, although they sought her for a long time. I was so grateful to the public relations director for her many efforts on my behalf that I tried very hard to supply the hundred and fifty words she needed for this column, but no words came. Each time I tried it, something would upset my sweet day at the hospital—the cook would cut one too many green peppers into the creamed chicken, the plumber would still

be unavailable to fix the dripping water faucet that whistled night and day; and my day in the hospital was not very happy after all. It seemed that the only things which really made any day happy were my daily letters, my guests, and my own personal experiences with the physio-therapist, Eva, or the rest of the polio circle, and nothing that the hospital itself controlled.

The deadline for the article was Tuesday at noon, and by ten o'clock I still had not a single word written. In abandon I picked up an old magazine and ran right into a double column by an actor, "What I Like About Women," and by an actress, "What I Like About Men."

"Here!" I gasped. "Now here is a popular subject!" And within twenty minutes I had a hundred and fifty words for a column which I entitled "What I Like About Internes, by a Lady Patient," at the bottom of which I invited some two-fisted interne to a rebuttal with "What I Like About Lady Patients, by an Interne."

The following morning the woman in charge of special subjects for The Mirror telephoned me and said,

"Miss Linduska, don't you think you have been a little hard on the internes? They work so hard!"

But I was hitting on all twelve vitamins that morning and firmly retorted: "That, of course, depends on whether or not you have a sense of humor."

When The Mirror came out, the column read exactly as I had written it. My stint was at least amusing to the patients if not to the internes. My only perturbation was that pale, handsome Count Vronsky might not understand.

And so more days added to those first twenty-one. Busy days filled with the hot-pack application and the serious physio-therapy exercises. But as we grew better, we found that our evening's entertainment was beginning to require more and more ingenuity.

Usually the polio circle, which now included Chip, and as always the cheerful Henrietta, selected the busiest part of the hallway which on our floor was the section outside of the personnel elevator. We became well known to many of the staff who had never been assigned to our care and our educations increased in many directions.

Visitors were permitted to remain for only an hour in the evening—that is, unless they were extra-special. Then we sometimes managed to hang the "DO NOT ENTER, PATIENT BEING TREATED" sign on the door again, and even the most conscientious nurse could be temporarily put off the track. Then again the regular visitors of other patients became our good friends and we acquired a rather unnecessary, but profuse knowledge of many awful diseases, their symptoms and their treatment. We learned a great deal about the sulfa-drugs and all the last-word cures for everything. We knew by the number of grains of morphine administered, just how the lady in 454 was getting along, and we spent a whole evening assuring a new patient that the X-ray therapy she was to receive was nothing at all to fear. We were a kind of special-council. On one evening after we had answered a dozen or more questions, we decided that we could really be of great value to the hospital, and that our services would even merit a little booth with a sign saying, "All kinds of questions answered here."

Sometimes some of the patients who had become our friends had other members of their family bring down their photograph albums so we could get acquainted with them all. Occasionally some would make special trips to the hospital to see us again, and others would bring their older children or their grandmothers to meet us too.

One day two young men came to re-visit Eva and me. They wanted to measure our fingers so that they could make up

rings from torpedo scraps in the defense plant where they now worked. Another time a very dark, handsome ex-soldier came into our room. He had a dashing scar on his left cheek and he used a cane.

"My name is Tony," he said, and he winked three or four times. He stayed for just a little while, and when he left he said, "If you ever want a steak, let me know. I can get one for you!"

The next day a woman came in. Eva and I looked at each other and gulped just a little.

"Me Tony's ma," she said. "I gonna tell your fortunes."

She was a beautiful gypsy and she wore a bright blue satin skirt with a ruffled flounce at the bottom, a white embroidered blouse, a yellow turban knotted at the back, and the big, gold-loop earrings. She had a magnificently embroidered shawl over her shoulders. But a nurse came in and there wasn't time for the fortunes.

We met another ex-soldier a short time later. He had not walked for eighteen months but the doctors at Michael Reese were helping him, and he was going to be all right.

"Please, Cal," we said, "don't be like the soldiers we read about all the time. Why don't you tell us about the war? We won't think you're bragging, and we don't believe too much about these psychological barriers that prevent men from talking about their experiences."

"I was in at Casablanca," he said. "I was pretty new, too; I hadn't been in the Army a whole year when I went over. The water looked like red oil and there were more men down than up. It was a goddamned awful experience. I play a saxophone, too," he said smiling. "That's what I'm going to do when I get out of here."

"When we have our first reunion," we said, "you'll have to play our every request."

One evening we met a fascinating tattoo artist who came to visit his girl. Some sort of complication arose from some of his handiwork on her, and now as he paced the floor waiting for the doctor's diagnosis we wondered what worried him most—the condition of his girl-friend, or the fact that his license might be revoked. We imagined that this was no small problem either, for with thousands of the Navy in Chicago the tattooing trade was undoubtedly flourishing. Without a doubt, the little woman couldn't have chosen a more inopportune time to exhibit delicacy.

Since none of us had ever known a real tattooed lady, Lissa and I went in to visit her the next morning. We found her chatting gayly and innocently with the white-coated, moustached little man whom we knew to be the psychiatrist. We thought that was a pretty mean trick to play on her—having her psychoanalyzed just because she had fallen for a man with a rather "different" profession. How about the girls that went bouncing down the highway on motorcycles just because their boyfriends wanted them to? And once I knew a farm-girl who drank a raw egg before breakfast every morning just because the hired-man said she should. And how about the rings that the defense plant boys promised Eva and me? We knew plenty of girls who wore monstrosities created out of plastics or South Sea Island souvenirs. Yes sir, we were pretty upset for a tattoo is a pretty permanent denial—and we hoped that the tattooer appreciated her *sacrifice d'amour.*

Inevitably, like any group snowbound in a mountain cabin, or marooned on a desert isle, we finally got around to playing charades in different forms. By the time we came to the word-spelling one, our vocabularies were enriched with several dozens of elaborate medical terms.

On one evening one of the patients from the Men's Ward, looking very lonely, passed our circle three or four times as he desolately paced the hall. He finally disappeared for a

few minutes and then returned with two Milky Way candy bars and a silver knife.

"Refreshments for your party," he smiled, and he began to slice off a piece for everyone.

"Oh, this is no party," Henrietta told him. "We do this every night."

"Too bad you're not dressed," Chip laughed, "or we'd send you out for hamburgers."

"If you'd like to play charades," I invited, "why don't you pull up a wheel chair."

The first word was something that Jay accidentally ended which put him out of the game again. We all laughed—Jay had no gaming luck whatsoever, and even in Monopoly he was always the first one to go bankrupt.

The second word began: *'P-H-E-N-O-S'* and came to our new friend. He looked bewildered. " 'Phenomenon' is the only one I know that starts like that. Are you sure the 'S' belongs?"

We all laughed again; the word we had in mind was *phenosulphonepthalein.*

"You just haven't been here long enough," we teased. And for the rest of the game we forgot our seven-syllable vocabularies and adhered to common stuff.

That very evening while Chip and Jay and I still sat outside our room doors, an orderly whom we had never seen before passed us with a cart on which lay a person with lovely, long blonde hair. The orderly wheeled his new patient right by us, down the corridor and directly into the Men's Ward and passed us again in a few minutes with an empty cart. We three looked at each other speechlessly, not knowing whether to believe what we had seen. Just then the orderly started back up the hallway, and Jay wheeled over to him: "Look, Boy," he said, "that woman you just brought up. Are you sure you put her into the right room?"

"Oh, ho, ho," the orderly laughed with a mouthful of tongue and tobacco, and slapping Jay almost out of the wheel chair, he roared, "That ain't no her, it's a *him* with long, curly goldilocks!"

I'm afraid that the mores of our pajama-clad society were a little hard on Mother's sensibilities.

"My goodness," Mother said the first night she saw the whole crowd out in the hall wheel-chairs, "it seems so indecent to see them sitting out there in their pajamas. It's too bad that both Henrietta and Lissa have colds, now you have no one to talk to."

Before she left, she was quite disillusioned, however, for one of the pajama-clad gentlemen knocked at my door and said, "Your barbecue's waiting for you, Noreen. Don't wait till it's cold." Mother tossed me a quick look, and I knew that she felt that walking wasn't the only thing I would have to learn all over again.

Sometimes as a result of all our guests and sniffles, and minor disturbances of various natures, only two of us would be left to spend an evening together. Then we would play serious games of Honeymoon Bridge or War. There would be times when we just sat and discussed our other lives. Frequently we sportingly bet dimes on the floors on which the elevator dial would stop, or how many tanks of oxygen would be set-up in a newlymade row at the end of the hallways where they were lined.

We played intense games of Chinese Checkers. This game outshone all the others, as we kept running scores. Chip was the inevitable champion from the outset. Occasionally we reviewed the books we had read although it was difficult for us to arrive at mutual tastes in the literary field. Jack liked comic-books, Chip and I liked the Russian authors or Oscar Wilde, Eva liked mysteries, and Jay, most of the ultra-modern writers.

But one Saturday evening, nothing seemed to satisfy. The weather had us definitely snow-bound, and even Henry, who had not missed one Saturday evening to keep me joyously supplied with laughter, gardenias, copy-paper and wine, could not come. Though the visiting hours had not yet dawned, the evening that lay before us looked unnaturally dull. None of us was in a mood to bestir any of the others to a common interest.

For the first time in almost six months I said, "I'm bored," and the words were immediately punctuated by a perfectly timed, "BOOM"! We were all in a circle at our usual spot near the personnel elevator. Suddenly we saw two men in Ed Wynn hats and black rubber coats, run up the stairs.

"Say," said Violet, "weren't those firemen?"

Could it be? Were they? Excitement for a change!

"Kind of smokey here, don't you think?" Chip said with a nonchalance that deceived no one.

Jay wheeled down to the men's ward corridor and shouted, "Look at the smoke down here!"

Somewhere on the floor above, we heard the sound of breaking glass. The call-sign for the doctors flashed signal after signal. Internes and nurses began to run up the stairs. Suddenly the elevator stopped on our floor, and Henrietta rolled out.

"You should see it on our floor," she sparkled. "From the window behind my bed, we could see the flames shooting out of the wall from the floor above!"

We scattered in various directions, and called out bulletins. Firemen poured up the stairway. Chip counted twenty-one—also a two-hundred-some pound chief in a white coat and helmet. Jack kept watch from the window in his room, and reappeared to keep us informed of the number of firetrucks. There were two—then six, and finally twelve!

"Well, Dusty old girl," and I scowled over my shoulder

into the face of a reporter from the *Sun*, with whom I had had some O.C.D. tussles the year before.

Newspaper photographers, with their Speed-O-Graphics and flash bulbs, kept the hallway busy with shooting flares. A few of the women from the Women's Ward, with their long gray pig-tails tied down with dainty pink or blue flower-pot ribbons, peeked into the hallway. I had always thought that they looked like little angels made from stuffed, white flour-sacks, with arms and heads sticking out.

Suddenly a man with a cigarette in his mouth, and a camera behind his back, said to me, "Saaaay, aren't you the little girl who wrote the article for my newspaper last Sunday?"

"Uhm, hmm," I said with just enough humility. "But I'm not interested in wheel-chair cheese-cake, thank you"—and when he became insistent, I hurried to my room, and shut the door. Eva lay unconcernedly in bed with an open box of chocolates on her bedside table, and a cigarette smouldering lazily in the ash-tray beside it. She was reading another spy story.

"Anything exciting?" she languidly asked, only half her mind with me.

"Exciting!" I gasped. "Exciting? Exciting! Gee!" and I wheeled to the door, carefully opening it, and peered to see what was happening down the hall. I saw half a dozen of the Men's Ward patients in their funny striped pajamas, and the little angels being posed for a group shot. In the front row, were Jack and Chip—with ear to ear camera smiles, and a pretty nurse had her arm around Jack's shoulder. Jay and Henrietta sat a safe distance away—they were holding hands. Everyone was having the best time!

"What a story!" I thought. I whizzed back into the room, and telephoned the big evening newspaper number and asked for the City Desk.

"There's a big fire at Michael Reese Hospital," I said.

"How would you like an inside story written by a patient?" The man at the city desk hesitated. I had to dress up the story. "You know, a lot of us can't walk, and most of the elevators are out of order."

"I'll call you right back," he said. He did too, in about three minutes, saying, "I'm sorry Miss Linduska, but we have just had a City Report that the fire is under control now. It's no longer news."

I hung up the receiver. "Under control!" What a story I could have made of it if we had all perished in the flames!

If pandemonium was ever orderly, it was that night. There was a continual flow of patients and equipment from the floors above to our floor and others below us by way of the one elevator which was functioning properly. By nine o'clock, however, most of the other elevators were repaired. The firemen were sending gallons of water up and down all the passageways, and all the available laundry was hauled from the supply rooms on each floor, and stacked on the open stair-landings and thoroughly soaked to prevent the fire spreading from floor to floor.

Several times during the evening, the electricity went off—either accidentally or purposely, but most of the nurses carried flashlights or battery lanterns. Their white uniforms were splashed and their shoes soaking, for all the hallways were covered with water. One of the orderlies, off-duty, passed the hospital on his way down town, when he saw the flames. He came in to volunteer his services in his Sunday clothes.

"Pretty exciting day at Michael Reese," he said. "One of the nurses committed suicide in the residence this afternoon!"

There were dozens of frantic visitors on the sidewalks and streets in front of the hospital. No one was permitted to enter the building, and all the fire-fighting equipment, the volumes of smoke, and the occasional visible flames must have been extremely frightening to them.

By eleven o'clock, everything was under control, and outside of a few cases of hysteria, there were no casualties. We were all surprised to find just a small paragraph without photographs dedicated to our fire in the Sunday morning newspapers, for it really had been more serious than the ash-tray blaze they likened it to.

The thermometer promptly fell, and for a week or more, the hospital was adorned with the magnificent icicles that had formed around the cornices from all the water used in extinguishing the blaze.

The fire was first rumored to have been started by a cigarette accidently tossed down the laundry chute, and then by spontaneous combustion in a closet between the sixth and seventh floors.

By the last week in February, the hot-packs were reduced from six a day to four a day. Packs, packers and packees were all more than a little weary. We each had worn out at least two sets of the heavy wet blankets. Tillie had more dents than ever from where she had collided with the furniture or the doorways, and jagged pieces of her enamel were completely gone. She squeaked louder than ever, and her wringer developed a plaintive wail and frequently collapsed altogether. Sometimes in desperation she pinched the packers fingers.

Four packs a day, usually meant that we were given three in the morning, and just one after lunch. The day from three o'clock in the afternoon on was absolutely our own to do with as we chose. It was hoped, however, that we would choose more often to try walking about a little, than staying abed to read. We were to walk in the hallways to gain not only strength and endurance, but also self-assurance. Heretofore, we had done all our walking in the physio-therapy gymnasium. Now in the hallways, we were like bats blinking in

the sunlight, and when we saw visitors or any of the hospital staff rushing in our direction, we were apt to flatten ourselves against the wall, or grab for the nearest chair. The floor still looked far away.

The first day I was in the hallway, trying to appear very nonchalant about my attempt to walk, a visitor stopped me and he said, "Say, girlie, did you make your crutches all by yourself?"

Since Jack had just been discharged from the hospital, Chip and I were the first ones of us to walk around. It was a very wonderful feeling to be able to get someplace by walking again, and I made up innumerable excuses to get out of bed and walk to the closet to get things for Eva or for myself.

On one of our first evenings up, Chip and I discovered the kitchen. Even though there were strict "no-admittance" rulings about it, it became our favorite haunt. We raided the forbidden refrigerator which had strange, unhomey assortments of oleomargerine, jello, custards and tomato juice. Sometimes we would go into the kitchen just to look out of the high, old-fashioned window that faced the Outer Drive. Far away were the mute silhouettes of the planetarium, the aquarium and the Field museum. "Haven't I seen you before?" I thought, as I looked at them again. Sometimes the night was clear and cloudless enough to see the electric bubbles on the Coca-Cola sign away down in the "Loop". Many evenings, too, we watched the Wolverine, the practice aircraft-carrier for the naval aviation cadets, coming into dock at Navy Pier.

The cold, high-ceilinged kitchen seemed especially cozy and warm on a rainy night, as the bare, smelly steam oven simmered emptily behind us. We would listen to the wind singing softly against the West Wing of the hospital, like a kitten rubbing against a strong man's leg. The lights on the

Drive were shimmering and golden on the pavement that looked like the hard, steel shell of a wet boat. And when the whole familiar picture was made enchantingly soft with new, white snow, my mind would silently hop the train pulling out on the tracks below, and I would be reliving a warm day at school in Champaign, or out in the same kind of night with the white snow deliciously wet around my ankles, as I plodded through some New York street, and Mike's Place would again be nothing more than a dream.

But we didn't have to plan all our entertainment—some of it came to us over the top of our swinging door. Eva and I really enjoyed our location near the visitor's alcove since it brought us unending entertainment. One day, while we were still in our afternoon hot-pack, we heard a hoarse voice saying over and over, "See more cats!"

We could not imagine why anyone could have reason for saying those three words over and over. Was he looking out of the window? Was he talking to the occupational-therapist with the stuffed animals? Was he having hallucinations?

Finally we heard another man approach him.

"What the hell are you talking about," he said simply.

"My name," the other man said, "is Seymour Katz!"

"How do you do, goddammit," the gruff man said, and quickly walked away.

Several afternoons later, we heard a similar voice saying, "You saw my vife, yestiddy?"

"That voman you vas talking to? Vas she your vife?"

"Yes! How old you tink she is?"

"Forty-something!"

"No! Fifty-something! And you know vhy she look so young? If you come to my house, you see thirty-dollars vorth of face creams. My vife ain't vashed her face in ten years!"

Silence.

"Now she got something new. You know vat are foundation-garments? It is something the young girls vear. My vife got vone, and for her figure, it costs eighteen dollars!"

One memorable evening, Eva and I gave up our supper celery so that we wouldn't miss a word of a wonderful heart-to-heart talk. An old man was talking to a young Jewish refugee who was very obviously depressed. He had been in America for only nine months, and he was very unhappy to have to give up his wonderful American school for the hospital. He talked as if his stay at Michael Reese would be a long one. The old man wheezed, and was difficult to understand, but we wouldn't have given up our eavesdropping seats for a hundred dollars.

"I'm from Spain," the old man said. "My father was a wealthy farmer. We had a big house and many servants, but I wouldn't trade one little rock in America, for all of Europe! Here you belong to your country, but at the same time it belongs to you. If you cut your finger in America, America will say, 'Let me cut my finger, too, so that I will know how to comfort you.'

"When I came to America in 1904, I saw soldiers in New York City. 'How silly,' I said to myself, 'that people in America should stoop to the stupid European way of settling an argument.'

"In Spain, my father was a rich man, and he could not afford to educate all of his sons and daughters. Here, I am a poor man, and I have five sons and three daughters and they all have a high-school education, and it didn't cost me a penny.

"One day I went to a little town in Wisconsin to buy a fishing license. The judge was all alone in his office—it was hot and the whole little town was deserted. He wanted to go fishing, too, so we went together. My wife was in the car so we

drove her back to the cottage. After we sat in the boat for some time—almost the whole afternoon—I said to the judge:

" 'You look for a long time now, like you want to ask me something. What is it?' The judge said, 'You look like a Jew, and yet I can tell that your wife is a Gentile. You are both old and you speak of eight children. Have you always been happy?'

"I looked at the judge, and I said, 'You want to know my nationality? Why? The world is God's house, and when we live in the world, we live in His house and we all eat at His table. We get our wheat from His fields, and our wine from His vineyards. If you are lousy, you are my brother, so give me one of your lice so that we can suffer together. Love doesn't know the meaning of the words nationality or wealth or position. Love has no fence around it!'

"You are desolate, but you should not be. You have escaped from the horrors of Europe, and besides that, God has given you the best. You are not a horse or a grasshopper or a mouse, you are a man! You were given the best—use it right!"

Eva and I were anxious to meet the gentleman who had spoken so wisely, but Charley told us that he was seriously ill and had that evening summoned his family to his bedside.

Life was funny and life was tragic—and always there were those who would come and those who would go.

The next afternoon two maids stopped outside the door.

"We haid the best time layst night, Maymie," one said.

"What'd you'all do?" asked Mamie.

"We played 'Rise and Fly'."

"Rise and Fly? How does y'all play thayt?"

"Well, we was down at Joe's Place. They haid music down theah layst night. Well, we all sits around a table and we plays cards, and then the one who loses at the game has to

rise up and dance by hisself til the rest of us are satisfied."

They mopped on for a while and then Mamie called,

"Say, Beulah, you'all know what I git from thayt lady who left 454 yestiddy?"

"I git a prit'near full big bottle of Sasparilla's 'Shocking' perfoom, and it sho does smell beautiful. I'm gonna save it to wear to church only!"

And from beyond the wall:

". . .So they beat us up!" I heard this for the fourth time that day. A round of male laughter followed.

If the hot-packs were nothing else, they certainly were confining! I lay in my room, a journalist and a woman—the strongest possible combination for curiosity—writhing in ignorance of what seemed to be a series of perfectly swell human-interest stories. The story-teller had a magnificent voice—clear and very deep—and his diction and grammar were without fault.

"Who in the world could have reason for beating up someone who sounds like that?" I wondered.

All day long it bothered me, and after dinner that evening, I heard the voice again. There was only one other voice in conversation with it, so I decided to see what it was all about. I put on my bright lipstick, and my red and white striped robe, and with my mind like a blank pad of paper and a pencil, I hopped into my wheel-chair, and sailed out into the hallway.

There were two young men sitting in chairs across from our room—I almost rolled into them. They whistled like wolves, but such polite wolves that I had to smile. Since I'm still a member of that silly old school of "No introducee, no speakee," I wheeled directly to the alcove and looked out of the window at the lighted Illinois Central train passing on the shiny tracks below. "If they don't come over, I'll at least get a cue to the beatings," I thought, but they came right over.

"My name is Dick," the cute blond one said, "—and this is my colleague, Jack."

"Hello. My name is Noreen," I said, "Noreen Linduska" —and I enunciated very carefully, for I had learned that even in the days when my voice-box was perfect, my name had to be ground out with the utmost care, for often after having passed down a receiving line, it came out something like Nxtuen Sczyxtvzd.

"So you're here since September," Jack, the dark one said. "That's a pretty long time."

I was surprised to discover that some Sherlock Holmsing had already been done, but living in a hospital is like living in a fish bowl, and nurses like most women are apt to give information to good-looking young men.

"Who beats who up?" I lunged—I couldn't wait.

"Me," laughed Jack, "—the Republicans!"

I was glad I had followed my curiosity out the door.

In no time at all, we were old friends. If we had known each other forever, we couldn't have reached a better level of understanding; all our words seemed to fill empty spaces in each other. I decided that evening that meeting people was like war news. Constant repetition dulls the excitement, but every once in a while something stands out.

Jack was a millworker—the kind of man tough male authors grab up for material. "The little guy" going places—blood, sweat, steel and an inspiration to work by. His background was the foundry—the back door—plenty of smelly smoke and white-hot fires. One day he found himself in the front office with a petition bearing fifty convincing names. His gang had selected him to present it to the boss. A point was won—a step made. He raised Hell, groups working for the boss beat him up, he raised Hell again, and he won another point. Suddenly organized labor found him, and he

found it. The Union and Jack had the same kind of guts. Jack went to night school—studied public speaking, took business courses at the University, and never forgot his four years with the marines.

"The union tried to organize me last summer when I was driving a truck for a florist," laughed Dick. "They were a little disappointed when they found out that I was the only worker my employer had."

"Say," said Jack with a kind of modest pride, "Did you see the new Reader's Digest?"

"No," I said, "I haven't seen it yet."

"Ever hear of Hilary St. John Saunders?'

"Sure," I said, "but don't tell me that's your pen name!"

"His book, *Pioneers, Oh Pioneers* is condensed in this issue. Here, take it. You can read it now, if you want to," and he winked a very good-looking Irish eye at Dick.

I read through it hurriedly, not knowing what to look for, but suddenly I came upon a section that was faintly marked with a blue pencil. It was the part which told of Mr. Saunders' tour of Chicago in the company of two youthful labor leaders.

"Oh," I said, "you?"

"My brother and me," and Jack went on to tell of some of the other experiences of that evening. The tours through the clubs and the churches and the views of the suburbs on the West side of Chicago which Jack felt Mr. Saunders had told of unfairly in his writing.

It was almost ten o'clock when I left the alcove, and I was very surprised and pleased when both Jack and Dick stood up to say goodnight.

"Goodnight," I said, "this evening has been lots of fun."

"Goodnight," they said, "—and oh," added Jack, "when you get out of here, drop around to the mayor's office, and I'll give you a job!"

CHAPTER VIII

I Meet Some Children and Get Away for a Night

I GAINED more respect for the Occupational Therapy Department and the little stuffed teddy-bears after I learned what an important part they played in hospital living. In spite of my personal disdain for the occupations it offered to me, the remainder of the polio circle had used it often. These patients completed many interesting items which, in effect, kept off the psychiatrist. As yet, he had not been called to my bedside, but I knew that the only reason he was not was that I had not yet bitten a nurse.

The O. T. Department, besides preparing the objects for further work by the patients, was actually contributing to the aid of the charitable end of our hospital. The items which were completed by the patients could be purchased by them for merely the cost of the materials. If a patient worked for work's sake, though, the handicraft was taken back to the department, sewed into cellophane bags, and sold at occasional "bazaars" to add to its treasury. Some of the animals were given to various relief agencies or to crippled children's hospitals.

Handicraft was not the only aim of the O. T. Department, however, and its directors always arranged for little parties

to celebrate the holidays—Hallowe'en, Christmas, Valentine's Day and the rest. Sometimes the long-periods between holidays were broken up by afternoon teas of a sort. On these days convalescent patients from all over the hospital were invited to the small room on the top floor of the hospital, and we joined in wheel-chair games, or listened to a Chopin concert given by a talented pianist seated before the small upright piano.

On one of these Saturday afternons we were invited up to the room for a few hours of gin rummy and tea. The fact that the outside world had replaced gin rummy by red dog, and tea with fish-house punch did not dull our pleasure one bit.

At four o'clock the occupational therapist had placed the tea kettle on the hot plate, and just as it began to whistle, the whole room was jarred by a loud crash from the elevator shaft. The particular elevator which took us to the room had more pulleys and cables than it did power. It was like an old Model T; all be-girdled, be-trussed and glued together here and there to keep up with things. The man who repaired it almost weekly looked like the sort who might dabble in the invention of perpetual motion machines in his spare time. At any rate, even immediately after a treatment, the elevator had never been dependable.

We finished our tea and cookies leisurely, and figured that the elevator would be ready when we were ready to leave the room. However, the crash seemed to injure it more seriously this time, and a telephone call from one of the hospital offices warned the therapist that we would have to be taken down another way.

There was only one other way to descend from the room, and that involved a trip across the roof tops. The room itself was surrounded by windows on all three sides. One long set of them opened onto a roof-garden which a restaurateur

would have relished for a swank dining spot. It was just high enough to miss the view of the railroad tracks, and all that could be seen from the terrace was the lake and the parkways which bordered it.

We were bundled closely into our blankets and taken one at a time across the paved portion of the roof onto the other tarred-and-gravelled roof top. The air was alternately flavored with Lake Michigan shrimp, new tar, and malt from our good neighbor, the Keeley Beer Company.

"What a swell place to play Cops and Robbers," Lissa said as we surveyed the roof angles that went zig-zagging around, and at all the Dick Tracy chimney hideouts. We finally stopped before a boarded-up wooden door with a peek-hole.

"Joe sent us," I said as a man carefully slid back the trap.

It turned out to be the hospital carpenter shop, and we had a good time browsing about it while the occupational therapist brought the rest of the patients over. There were pieces of furniture here that looked like real Biedermeyer and early Americana. Finally a very old, even more rickety, freight elevator arrived and took us two at a time back to our floors. The experience furnished another article for The Mirror.

Since explosions seemed the fashion of the moment, the following Saturday there was another in the sterile steamer room, and old Tillie took a nervous last-breath and broke down altogether. There could be no hot-packs that day, and needless to say, we were all dreadfully sorry.

Since the public relations director had come to be my friend, I had begged her to take me with her on one of her occasional tours through the children's hospital. This Saturday seemed to at last fit into both of our schedules, and I could hardly wait to have the tour begin.

It was not that I missed being around small children, for I had never had the chance to be. *Chez-nous* is strictly adult,

and it is never c-a-n-d-y or d-a-m-n, it's candy! or damn! In fact, the only contact I have ever had with children was when I was one myself. Consequently when I find myself alone with a small child, I feel a little like a speaker on a platform who has just felt both of the shoulder straps of her slip pop. I smile intelligently, for I have never been at all adept at baby-talk, and then I ask him pertinent questions like what he thinks of the weather, or if he has read any especially startling fairy-tales lately. Then my mind fidgets and squirms, and I can't wait until I get out into the air and the company of less-perceptive adults.

At last the public relations director, with the usual yellow-pencil behind her ear, arrived at my room. I had really dressed for the occasion, and was wearing some navy-blue flannel slacks and a red sweater and red ski-socks, since shoes had not yet again become familiar items of apparel.

"Let's go!" she said, and chattering like a news commentator, took control of the back of my wheel chair and began to give me the most exciting ride I ever hope to have in all my life. She was a very busy woman who always walked very fast, and now as she leaned her weight against the chair, I could see that at least I would not detain her. We went zig-zagging from one end of the corridor to the other, for obviously wheel chairs were not intended for speeds over fifty miles an hour. The back wheels, which naturally acted as a kind of ballast, spun around, giving no aid whatsoever to the control of the speeding chair. Other pedestrians seeing us coming thought no doubt that I was an emergency patient bleeding to death, and being rushed in the nearest possible vehicle to the emergency room, for they either flattened themselves against the walls or ducked inside of doorways. One man, who did not see us in time, perched himself on a window sill, just as we went whizzing by. The joggling elevators which

went falling from floor to floor gave me a chance to catch my breath, and as soon as they stopped at the floor where we were to embark, I took a last deep breath and off we went again. I dared not close my eyes, for I was certain that I had saved a few limbs by shouting out directions to my back-seat driver.

We stopped first on the second floor of the hospital where we were to interview a celebrity. Celebrities are not new to hospitals, and just the week before I had missed an interview with a National League Baseball star because of the hot-packs.

"There he is," the public relations director said, and we saw him walking toward us. He was dressed in a very festively striped robe which made him look more like a gallant Palm Beachcomber than the eighty-year-old gentleman he was becoming that day. He nonchalantly swung forward a gold-tipped cane with every step, and in spite of his age he carried himself with the straight grace of a pine tree; even his close-cropped gray head was cocked like that of a general.

"Good morning Mr. Lederer," the public relations director said. "This is the young woman you wanted to meet," and I dreamed for a moment that he was going to propose for his grandson who was undoubtedly the Crown Prince of a great and famous kingdom!

But instead, he said the usual thing, "Good morning," and "I read your newspaper article with the greatest of interest." I was tired to death of hearing about the newspaper article, and I didn't like to be judged by it, for it didn't include any of the kind of writing which my Nobel Literature Prize winner of the year 2005 would include. He asked me whether I had been a newspaper reporter, and I couldn't even say that I had been a lowly copy-girl.

Then, standing there in the middle of the hallway, he began to tell us some of his stories, for it seemed that he had been a reporter of considerable reputation. He had been the agent

and promoter for such lights as Lillian Russell, Will Rogers, and Sarah Bernhardt. He told us fascinating stories of the early Chicago "legitimate" stage, and then included real-life pictures of Madame Snow and others who had run the cerise incandescent areas in the real days of golden glitter.

At last we found a gap where we could insert the happy birthday greeting we had come to deliver to him. "It's from everyone in the hospital," I said as I handed it to him. Everything in his life had been a "message"—that I could tell, for he soberly reached for the card, studied its ridiculous illustration of a gay old blade, and read the none-too-sentimental verse. We had planned the visit, not so much for the hurriedly selected card itself, but for the spirit of the greeting. He read it over and over, and then he said, "Is this supposed to be funny?" He was not sarcastic, merely inquiring. The public relations director and I looked feebly at each other, and had to shake our heads sadly and admit that it was not supposed to be funny—just convey a greeting, that was all.

But Mr. Lederer had recovered his charming, almost old-world grace, and thanked us—kissing our hands and insisting gracefully that we visit him soon again. That, I eagerly intended to do one day—but that day never came.

We left him as we would leave a dream, and for a few short feet the public relations director was a leisurely Sunday driver. However, our destination was the children's hospital, and soon we were off to the races again.

We were able to reach the annex of Sarah Morris hospital by a connecting arcade which crossed the exclusive Meyer House section. Meyer House, although a complete part of the hospital, which like all the others cared for the ill, catered solely to the Waldorf Astoria class, and as we whizzed through it I got glimpses of the beautiful interiors of the rooms—broadloom carpeted floors, exquisite bedsteads, and tile baths.

Then we went out to the ramp, which sloped deeply at its end and gave an extra thrill to both my chauffeur and myself. We landed with a small thud against a heavy iron door.

A gentleman pedestrian swung open the door, and we were in the children's hospital. I could hardly believe my ears; it sounded like a zoo!

Since the public relations director had her own business to settle in the children's hospital, she left me alone and asked that I meet her at the iron door in an hour. I regained my breath and then went slowly wheeling down the corridors. In one of them I discovered a nurse who had taken care of me when I had first come to the hospital. She was now a supervisor on this floor and acted as my guide. There was a room quarantined with a measles sign, and I was allowed to peek through the doors of another where a half-dozen incubators housed tiny pink boys and girls, who sometimes even kicked their legs and whimpered like pussy cats.

Everywhere there was so much more activity than in our building. Everyone was scuttling about; the place looked like a Saturday morning in a wedding-kitchen.

The supervisor took me to one of the corner wards where there were five or six cribs with their bars pulled high around them. There was a healthy-looking little child in each of them, and all were jabbering noisily to each other or to themselves. The children wore their own clothes, which varied from bright blue rompers with a fat yellow duckling sewed smack against the fat baby stomach, to the wee-est red dotted dress that had panties-to-match. One tough little fellow with black curly hair had one of his legs slung over the top of the crib-bar and was on his way out when we entered. He was undoubtedly the son of a marine sergeant.

Another small character yelled at the top of his lungs for us to come over to tell him whether he was supposed to color

the teddy bear in his picture-book with the green or the purple wax crayon. I looked yearningly at the picture book—I would have loved to help him.

"This is Noreen," said the supervisor.

"Noween," said the little red polka-dot lovely with her finger in her mouth, and her head innocently tilted in a shy look.

"Noreen" bellowed the sergeant's son.

Suddenly there was quite a din, and I was asked to wave a quick goodbye. Standing at the doorway with his hand in that of an interne was a very small boy in blue overalls. His hair had just been combed, and he was holding his other hand seriously on his hip regarding the supervisor and me.

"Tell them your name," the interne said.

But the little boy said he didn't remember his name, and anyway, he would rather sing "Minnie the Mermaid" for us. We reluctantly departed after the tenth chorus.

I left the supervisor and wheeled to the elevator which would take me to the floor where the little polios were. When the elevator came, I noticed that instead of landing as it should it bounced first six-inches above floor-level, and then six-inches below. The red-faced, white-haired elevator man mumbled with each bumping, "They say up when they mean down, they say down when they mean up—they wanna go up, no, they wannt go down—"

"Hey," I said, "you're talking to yourself."

"No I ain't. Oh dammit, dammit, dammit, no, I ain't" and he went on bouncing.

Finally he stopped, and although the elevator was not at floor level, the jolt I got when he wheeled me in was little in comparison with my wild ride to the children's hospital.

He closed the cage door, and then placing both hands on his knees he bent over me and said, "Do you wanna go up?" and he pointed in a quick gesture, "or do you wanna go down?"

and he shot his hand downward, and jutted out his chin.

"Up," I said, pointing straight ahead. "Up to the fourth floor."

We shot up like a rocket.

"Four," he shouted triumphantly. As he wheeled me out he looked at me again and said, "Say, ain't you a little big for this place?"

"No," I answered as I wheeled away, "I just growed fast!"

The public relations director appeared in the hallway just then, and since she had completed her business she took me in charge once more. We went directly to the polio ward.

The room was buzzing with activity. Two or three nurses were making up the beds and Tillie's counterpart and the children's packers were at the corner crib. I peeked behind a screen and saw a little boy playing half-heartedly with a tractor.

"Don't you feel well, fella?" I asked sympathetically.

"Feel swell," he grumped. "They put a screen around my bed because I sang a dirty song."

Little polios were in all the other cribs. Most of them were in packs. When we entered, they looked at us coolly for a minute and then went on with what they were doing. One little girl leaned comfortably against the bars of her crib, and her mouth around one of them.

"What are you doing, dolly?" I asked, trying to be friends.

"I eatin' my bed!" she said, very matter-of-factly.

"They ought to censor these kids' books," I thought, turning rather red. "Too much Hansel and Gretel ain't good for nobody!"

The best incidents, of course, were the spontaneous ones which happened every day. It was the therapists and the nurses who had the most fun. Almost all the little girl polios gave their dolls the Kenny exercises too.

"Think here," they'd coo, and they would move the doll's arm or leg.

One day when the therapist stood one of the little girls, her knee collapsed and she tumbled down.

"Did you get hurt?" the therapist asked.

"Oh, no," said the little sage, "what's a leg compared to a life!"

Here I was in a roomful of the tiniest "victims" as the newspapers called them. From this room the photographers would have a field day—red, curly hair, long black braids, tiny pug noses with freckles, big black moon eyes, funny baby wheel-chairs—on the chair by that bed a shiny leather-strapped brace anchored to a size 8½ high white kid shoe. It was all so ridiculous and so tragic at the same time—children have the same sad little expression in their faces for both stomach-aches and wars.

In this room were the little shoes that would be lifted into the Orthopedic School Bus that used to pass our house every morning as I was running down the front stairs to catch the 7:45 "L." These little shoes wouldn't fit into roller skates or skis or be exchanged for soldiers' boots. These would know a different world than that of being center-fielder on the local dry goods baseball team. It wasn't sad—it was simply different, and I knew undramatically that there is a place all picked out in this world for every one of those baby faces. Being in this room was like a prolonged interruption; it was like seeing between the minutes of a clock, or like the sorting-room in a bean factory—you'll go here, and you, there!

The play-room was adorable, and it sat like a little bird house on top of one side of the hospital. The big alphabet border on the green linoleum ran around the room and ended up perfectly with "Z." There were large windows on three sides of it, and it opened onto a pleasant wide terrace on which

there would be beach umbrellas and sand-boxes in the summertime. It looked very much like an East River penthouse, from which height even the ugliest scene took on a misty and lovely look.

There were small tables and chairs and the walls were lined with picture books and shelves with modeling clay—boxes of colored beads and the inevitable stuffed calico teddy-bears and elephants and the 1944 Bambi.

There were slates and chalk, and I was surprised to discover that the hospital employed regular teachers so that children and older boys and girls would not fall far behind their grammar-school or high-school classmates. But as soon as word would spread that the teacher was on her way, children would miraculously disappear from their beds and hide under them. Even one little boy who could not walk was found by his teacher hiding in the closet at the opposite end of the room.

The fact that they were polios did not stop them from being little boys and girls, and strangely enough, they cried very little. They adored the doctors and nurses and all in all, their attitude proved that they thought being ill was a pretty slick vacation—with candy and dolls and little playmates night and day.

I didn't say very much on our way back through the arcade to my room—I kept thinking how awful it was that the newspapers didn't tell some of the other stories there were to tell about children who lived for long times in hospitals. I wondered how the world had come to build up its strange fascination for what they called "unfortunates," so that when these same "unfortunates" went out into the world, they were treated so differently!

Why and when had physical perfection become so important, when mental imperfection, more easily remedied, went along so unnoticed. Little crippled boys were given sympathy

because they could not walk, but how about the little boys who had never been taught to read or write. How about the minds of the children who lived in the same room where the adults in the family slept. Would their minds be crippled? Would somebody pity them if they could run very fast but didn't believe in the future of honesty? Would they be pitied if they lacked whatever it takes to love the dark-skinned children whom they had gone on strike to ban from their high schools? Would they be pitied if they grew up to think that sex was the only thing in life worth working for, and that to be a pin-up girl in a movie studio was the greatest honor a woman could achieve?

I couldn't forget these happy children that I saw, and the pictures I had read that were painted from them—supposed portraits from real-life subjects. I knew that I couldn't help beginning a crusade so that people would be considered people whether they went to a school that didn't have stairs to climb or whether they played the piano instead of football.

I tried to forget this thought, for I am worthless in fighting one-man wars. I was certain that I would forget it completely, for on the next week that I returned from my tour of the children's hospital, I read an article in the newspaper which told of a rally to be held in downtown Chicago that very evening.

Well, I love rallies! Big picnics and big rallies. Where everyone takes his hair down and communes with an urge. People at picnics and people at rallies are different from people anyplace else. Even the excuse for a rally, for example, is so bold that sometimes it isn't even an excuse. An obscure sentence at the bottom of a newspaper page may be spotted by an insurgent. The sentence is taken to a sign shop and repainted in huge eighteen-inch block letters and decorated with stars and stripe and "bingo!" a rally is born! Green and orange handbills are printed and there you have it.

The newspaper-page sentence may be, "No new school desks"; the banner! "Who says 'No new school desks?' " A rally follows with a brass band, and almost overnight there is enough money in a treasury for three-hundred new school desks with chromium plated legs, and down-filled red-leather seat cushions.

I had no sooner finished reading the newspaper article when my telephone rang. It was the public relations director.

"There's going to be a rally in town tonight for Sister Kenny. Would you like to go?"

Would I?

The newspaper telephoned me that afternoon.

"We'll send out a couple of reporters to get you," they said. "They may have to come in a delivery truck. We hope you won't mind."

I loved it. I had not been out of the hospital since my Christmas holiday at home, and I giggled hysterically as I relayed the good news to Eva. She dubiously raised a slow eyebrow.

I telephoned to my parents not to come as I was stepping out for the evening. At seven o'clock a man telephoned from the desk downstairs. They would not let him come up. The usual complications had set in. In my hysteria about going I had forgot to get my doctor's permission; so, of course, I could not go.

But it was a rally, and no obstacle too difficult. Even at that hour I managed to reach one of our internes at his room in the doctor's residence, and finally a call to the supervising nurse on my floor assured me of a kind of unethical permit to leave the hospital for one evening.

The reporter was allowed to come upstairs. I immediately recognized him as such, as he swaggered down the hall in a tweed topcoat and a battered grey felt hat in his hand.

I was dressed and waiting—in my navy blue slacks and fur jacket, and I carried my white angora mittens and a babushka. I was even wearing shoes for the occasion.

"They sent me," he smiled, "because I am the fattest one on the staff, and we didn't know how much you weighed."

I was not agile enough to be permitted about with my crutches, except in the hospital corridors, and I had not yet even thought of learning how to project my wavering limbs on the stairs.

The rally was being held in a building in the heart of the Loop. It was the first time I had been downtown since September, and I felt exactly like I used to when we passed through it at the end of every summer, on our way back from the farm in Michigan.

The reporter parked the car at the curb and went upstairs for a wheel chair. The same people were pacing Randolph Street, and I saw that I hadn't missed a thing. Men still stared at the lady in the parked car.

The cop from Randolph and Dearborn came up and said, "Whatsa big idea, lady, you can't park here!"

I had to tell him about the wheel chair, and his fat red face became soft. It was unbecoming.

A white-uniformed nurse rolled the chair out to the curb, and the reporter lifted me out of the car into it.

"Hungry?" he said, and he dropped a big bag of salted peanuts into my lap.

This was a new kind of rally for me. I had never been to one in a hall with rugs on the floor—no free beer and sandwiches either—but it had all the show!

The hall was almost half-filled—a couple of hundred people—and the wheel-chair squeaked like a mouse circus. Everyone turned to look down the aisle—the organ broke into a resounding chorus of *Glory, Glory Hallelujah.* I bit my lip

—it seemed as if I would have to laugh out loud otherwise.

I couldn't ascend the platform, so the nurse helped me to a chair in the front row. It wasn't bad. I munched the peanuts, and out of the corner of my eye, I watched the rest of the hall fill. Then the children who were to sit on the platform began to arrive, and a strange kindred feeling arose midway when our glances met. I saw a little boy with a chromium-plated brace on his back and his arm stuck out on a shelf extending perpendicularly from his body. They put him in the front row. Suddenly the peanuts stuck in my mouth, and my whole body surged with an emotion that I could not identify. I began to breathe faster, and I simply could not decide whether to laugh or cry.

What kind of a crazy, upside-down cockeyed dream was this! CRIPPLED CHILDREN! Remember Fathers' Elk's parties? Remember the Girl Scouts! Remember the Woman's Clubs! Hey! Just a moment! I don't belong with crippled children! I'm on the wrong side of this fence! —And the silly organ played the *Anvil Chorus!*

Two reporters and a photographer came down the aisle and squatted down in front of me.

"We want your picture."

"Look," I said in a dream, "—pretty girl, in front row. Long curls, blonde! Not me— Her!"

"Look," they said, "we pick you up in nice automobile—we take you for nice ride along Outer Drive, we buy you big bag of peanuts. All we want is picture. Be a good girl!"

Then I was back in the wheel chair with the white nurse to help me—down the long aisle—that's what they mean by "a sea of faces"—into the elevator, down to the main lobby, out to the parked car at the curb. People stopped, cars stopped, the cop on the corner became v-e-r-y a-n-g-r-y. The reporter flexed his biceps and picked me out of the wheel chair,

and held me in his arms. People jammed the sidewalk. Suddenly I saw a fat man with thick glasses. He didn't know that anyone was watching him—he thought everyone was watching me. Then I looked at many other faces—some mouths were open, some eyes looked wild—.

Well I'll be darned! I was stopping traffic!

"Smile!" shouted the photographer.

I laughed like a lady hyena.

All the rally accessories were there. The appeal to the necessary groups—the soft-soap for the parents. How glad I was that I was here alone—alone it was fun, it was a crazy dream—it was a wild game! Without Mother it was easy to laugh at.

This time the ladies' auxiliary was the corps of uniformed nurses. The regular speakers were there—from the men's clubs, from the women's clubs. The usual come-on—a beautiful actress, wearing a soft, champagne-colored chiffon evening dress—very, very *décolleté*—a clump of purple violets at her bosom, and a rhinestone choker. She had a soft, deep voice. "She even smells beautiful," the woman behind me whispered as she went by.

The main attraction was a big-name speaker who caused hitches in the program until he finally showed up around ten.

One of the lesser speakers said that it was a shame to have a rally for such a worthy cause—and I agreed. (I think most money-raising rallies are like theriaca, which is an antidote to poison and consists of many drugs and honey.)

I sat through it all like a girl in the projection room in a movie house, watching all through the square hole cut in the wall. I was no more a part of this than of any other rally. I never heard the speeches—I heard instead word-fumbles like "pack of sotatoes," instead of "sack of potatoes." "Sister Kelly," the speaker said, and I jerked up my eyes angrily and watched him leisurely fumble through his notes. After a while

he said, "I mean Sister Kenny." I removed myself to the projection room again, and next door I heard noises. I thought the allied bartenders or something were having a meeting there; I noticed when I passed that they were wearing little white aprons.

My eyes came back again to watch the Legion flag and our American Beauty waving slightly in their stands, and then my eyes drifted to the stage. Everything seemed ill-timed and boorishly out of place.

I sat very still and sulked.

"Hells-bells," I smoldered. "Just because they (not me) are cripples, they're on a stage." The thought stuck and grew like a beanstalk.

Someone repeated that it was a pity to have a rally for such a worthy cause. "Yes, Yes!" my mind cried out, and then I remembered that it isn't the rally—it's the whipped cream! The rally isn't awful at all, it's the babies in braces sitting on a platform. Already they have been set apart for people to stare at. Doesn't the name infantile paralysis speak for itself? Why have they been put up there, why not down here with the rest of the people? Anyone in the audience has wants that could be dramatized into a rally. There—that woman—her husband is a dipsomaniac—put him up here on the platform —show him to everyone—tell the people that that woman down there is his wife—he beats her. That little boy with the brace—that woman down there is his mother—he makes her cry—keep him on the stage to remind them both when they are alone, that he is different! — Different!

Who said that cripples are unforunates? Do they, or do you? Just because they can't dance. All music has to stop sometime anyway. Just because they can't play tennis? Lots of times the sun is too hot! Just because you have to help them up and down stairs? Is there something else you would rather

do? Polio is not sad—it is just darned inconvenient—it means you can't have those fits of temper and run into your room and kick the door shut anymore. Cripples is an awful word. It specifies! It sets apart! It is too intimate! It is condescending! It makes me want to vomit like a wiggling creature coming out of the cocoon.

But some nasty politician said something nasty to a wonderful woman, and dowagers rolled back their mink cuffs and with their arms around little crippled children, they got their pictures in the paper. Wouldn't it have been a compliment to the people to say instead: 'Sister Kenny wants to stay in America, and we think that she has done enough to prove that what she wants is pretty good stuff. All she needs to keep her here is a lot of money—will you help?'

So someone said something, the stinker, but it didn't matter, for Sister Kenny will stay in America. In true American form, someone anonymously sent her a single check for one-million dollars, the reporter told me on our way out. The different groups represented at the rally were all contributors, too, with checks for ten, fifteen or one-hundred dollars.

The rally was wild-fire—I was carried away with the drama, and when someone said, "Miss Linduska, do you have a statement for the press?" I said, "Ah, yes! Polio without Kenny is like strawberries without cream!" and I lay awake half the night worrying that they would print it!

After the rally, on our way back to the hospital, a cop lolled over to our car, and breathing heavily into the reporter's face, he said, "Wash the bigg iddea, going the wrong way on a one-way shtreet!"

"Aren't we all!" I said.

CHAPTER IX

Intercalary

ON the first Monday in March, following a complete muscle check-up which was viewed by not only my physio-therapist, but also my doctor and the handsome Count Vronsky, it was decided that my hot-packs be discontinued. My muscles, except for the funny one which pulled the great toe on my left foot downward, had completely relaxed. Of course, many of them were still as weak as feathers. Now all that I needed, was to get as strong and fat and tough as possible, for if I tried hard enough, and had reasonably good luck, I would really be able to walk. The physio-therapist and doctors were pleased too, for I constituted a successful experiment in which braces were not used.

But "No-More-Hot-Packs" was the bulletin of the day! The joy that I experienced when I found that they had been prescribed for me, was perfectly matched with the glee I felt when the last one was removed and raggedly dropped into the waste basket. It was like the clearing and the sunshine after a long trek through a tangled jungle—it had had its moments, and would be something to remember ever after, but it was nice to be able to look back!

In my non-mathematical mind, I figured how many of the

hot-packs I had had, and decided that I had been wrapped and unwrapped in the little monsters almost a thousand times. But they were comforts almost to the very end.

But now physio-therapy was all important. The slow process of building up was to receive my full time efforts. Walking increased distances each day became life's foremost endeavor, but one hundred feet was still quite a hike.

But now I was really a spectacular picture of health, for in addition to walking, I had just learned how to swallow my vitamin capsules down in complete form, and I knew if there would be another bonfire someday, I could quickly take an aspirin and fetch my own hot-water bottle. Eva laughed at my vigor, for even though I considered myself a robust super-woman, I still ate at the pace of a snail.

The first day after my hot-packs had been discontinued, I was permitted to attend a kind of splash party in the hospital swimming pool. For years swimming had been my favorite hobby, and for all the months in the hospital, my only aquatic experience had been in getting in and out of a bath tub.

The hospital pool was in the basement, and except for a lack of bouncy rubber sea-horses and gala-colored inflated mattresses, it looked like the indoor pool of a luxury liner. The glass brick windows and the vari-shaded blues in the tiled wall and floor, were sophitsicated and definitely chic.

In our own bathing suits, we polios were rolled off the hospital carts which conveyed us to the pool, onto a shiny maple board with chromium-plated accoutrements. The board was carried by a power-pulley from the drafty dressing room, directly over the pool and lowered gently into the tepid water. The wide tapes which unrolled from the bars along each side of the board were precisely the same kind of mechanism which lowers a casket into a grave. It was an odd comparison, but for me it lent a sort of thrill to the occasion.

In the water we were all more than amazed at our powers. What with the buoyancy of the water, and the muscle-substituting that automatically took place in our limbs, we discovered that we could walk beautifully just by holding on to the bar with our fingertips.

Actual swimming, however, was not such a gay experience. For when I leaned out to try a remembered stroke, I found that my heavy, lazy legs would not come to the surface, but drunkenly lagged behind, keeping me in a right-angle position. I was quite disappointed that my favorite sport had deteriorated so but the fact that I was not afraid in the water, and had walked so well in it, supplied ample encouragement for the future.

But in spite of the great fun we all had at the splash party, it was not repeated. The danger of muscle-substituting was too great. We might easily use the wrong muscles on land as we had done in the water, although the gravity pull against them would be much greater than it had been in the pool.

Therefore, walking increased distances daily became the most pleasant order of the day, and now I seldom saw Eva except at mealtime or bedtime.

Walking increased distances daily, meant merely increasing the number of times I walked back and forth in the corridor outside my own room. After a short while, the corridor grew desperately monotonous, and even though I knew that prowling about from floor-to-floor would be disrupting to hospital routine and strictly forbidden, I did it each time after I had promised not to. Besides, I felt the key to the public relations director's office in my pocket, and thought that in case of a showdown, I would have a cool excuse. The temptations of the halls beyond became too great to suppress. After so long a time in bed, I felt that anything I would be able to view would be a real revelation.

The greatest temptation of the halls beyond had always been the "admitting room" of the hospital. I never once overlooked an excuse to pass it to see what new bit of tragedy had come to the hospital. Even on the night after the rally, I insisted on being taken to the admitting room instead of to the front door where my wheel chair had been waiting. My curiosity was always rewarded too, for on that night I saw the most enormous man I had ever seen in my life. He had been hit by an automobile, and I desperately wondered what the automobile looked like now.

Instead of walking about the halls in the usual patient apparel of house-coat and pajamas, I dressed in the civilian-looking outfit of the navy blue slacks and white shirts, so that I would better blend with any place I visited. To keep up natural appearances I found it necessary to launder some of the white shirts in my room in the evening, and would go to the occupational therapy room on the roof to iron them. The volunteer workers there were fascinated by my indulgences in such a homey task, and I found it necessary to hush a particularly fawning woman by telling her that as soon as I left the hospital I would return to the Chinese laundry to continue the profession I left when I became ill. I had to keep secret the destination of my daily walks, since my parents did not approve of anything the doctors prohibited, and seven white shirts in one week's wash would have given the secret away.

Then casually walking the length of the corridor, I looked around to see if I had been watched, and finding the coast clear, I entered the freight elevator and descended to the ground floor where the admitting room was located. I walked the length of the hallway to the group of chairs lined outside of it. Placing my crutches inconspicuously in a corner behind my chair, I sat down and opened a magazine, pretending that I awaited someone inside. Suddenly the outside bell rang,

and a nurse from the admitting room hurried to the door that opened on the ambulance drive. Through it, I could see a Black Maria parked outside. Two roly-poly city policemen opened the hatch and helped a woman to descend the step to the ground. She was a Negress, shaped like a string bean, and her hair was done up on top of her head and tied with a yellow ribbon that made a coiffure identical to mine.

She wore high-heeled red suede shoes and Queen's Lace black hose. Her brown fur coat ran in stripes all around her. The coat was topped off with a fluffy titian-colored collar, the effect of it being much like Little Black Sambo's tiger running around the palm tree.

The lady was young in an ageless sort of way. She had been young, that is, and I could not quite tell whether it had been this morning, or some days ago, for she held her coat about her in the 1927 flapper style. Here and there from the tightly-held coat, peeked the folds of a yellow-splashed black silk flared skirt. Her face was pretty and her lipstick so bright that she looked as though she wore a neon sign for a mouth. Her eyes were wide and absolutely tearless, but she screamed in one squeaky, continual high line that was the perfect Hollywood version of hysteria.

Behind her was one of the policemen, steering a rather retiring, pale blonde man who pointed seriously to the violin case his escort carried, and said, "Be careful theah suh, thayt violin is worth one-thousand dollahs."

Then he reached ahead for the arm of the little dark person, and all the way from the door to the admitting room, he said over and over, "Now Baby, don't you'all cry. Ah'm all right, A'm all right."

The nurse in the receiving room was ready for him, and when she removed his green hat, his pale blonde hair was matted and blotched with bright red, and a thin, bright,

shining red river trickled down the right side of his face. He removed his pencil-striped green suit coat, and I gasped out loud, for under it was an amazing revelation. He wore a shiny blue satin shirt tied with a marigold-yellow silk scarf. On the back of his pencil-striped vest there blazed a gorgeous beach scene of Hawaii embroidered in intricate detail.

"Thayt's all right now, Baby," he said patting the nurse's arm assuredly. "Ah ain't hurt very bad. She just hit me with a little beer bottle because she loves me!"

I hurried back upstairs to tell Eva what I had seen, but before I got to my room, I saw that Jay and Chip were engaged in a conversation with a tall fellow who leaned against the wall near their wheel-chairs.

The man had been forty, I judged, and he wore a stiff navy blue suit and an uncomfortable white shirt. His collar-button was not in its buttonhole, but he wore a loosely-knotted black silk tie. His hair was parted in a sharp zig-zag, and it was slicked down with nothing weaker than real petroleum jelly.

Big bony wrists and hands hung out of his coat sleeves, and he clutched with both of them, a salt and pepper tweed cap. His shoes had the bulldog bump toes, and they went up over his ankles; and I knew, even though I could not see them, that his socks were white.

His eyes were outlined in a deep purple-pink, and his big Adam's apple bobbled up and down as he said to us: "Shorr 'tis many the shot and beer that Paddy and me had at Kelley's. But no morr, no morr!" and he wiped his nose on the back of his hand. "But Paddy had his good times, porr fillow. Siven times married, and now there ain't but me to burry 'im."

And as we three sat there big-eyed and sorrowful, we saw Paddy, covered with a gray blanket, whizzed out of the Men's Ward to the morgue elevator. James T. Farrell, in his story of the immortal wake, could not have done the picture better.

CHAPTER X

This "God Is My Co-Pilot" Business

ONE afternoon near the end of March, Jay and Chip and I were sitting on the terrace which ran across the front of the hospital and faced out into the lake. Since hot-packs had been discontinued, the terrace was our favorite hide-away, for once out on it, we felt like the rest of the world. We were in our wheel chairs, and it was a beautiful day. The wind was cold and wild, but the sun was shining furiously and the lake pranced about like a peppered colt.

Jay was sketching, and Chip and I had our eyes buried in pocket editions. I was reading *Nana* again! I still hadn't the courage to progress very far in my gift-copy of *Magic Mountain,* for inevitably I seemed to develop a hollow cough which made me sure that I was a phthisic too. Misery would love the company of Hans Castorp, but I never was quite miserable enough! But the day was too impatient—even for Zola, and I looked up to where the sky met the water. It was a long way off, and out there they both were a dark gray.

"It is as far away as September, and as dark," I thought. And then I brought my eyes back in a straight line. Gradually the water became bluer and lovelier and the sky was shattered into small clouds that became bigger and fluffier and finally, near the shore, the water was a pure, clear blue, and

the sun broke away from the clouds altogether and danced merrily on us and everything around us.

It was such a charming discovery that I gasped out loud. How well the sky and the water told the story, and behind me —behind the hospital—the sun would be still more brilliant. What a nice prospect! A straight, sunny line right into the inevitable sunset. The dark grayness was past, away and beyond, and the best time of all would be now and now and all the rest of the now's that would make up the rest of my life!

I had never been ill before, and here I was on my sixth month in a hospital. It was just a dream of course, for something which would keep someone in a hospital for six months could never happen to me!

Suddenly Jay began to hum *Sibonay*. I looked at him quickly, and then I was far away on a boat. I was sitting on a deck chair eating a hot-dog sandwich with a young man in a dinner-jacket. The stars were so low that we could have picked them—and it looked as if some of them would get caught on the bridge of our ship. Behind us an orchestra made up of strings was playing something soft and lovely, and on the little dance floor, strung with pretty-colored paper lanterns, there were several couples dancing. All at once a little dark man with a moustache came up to me. He said,

"Senorita, that song is *Sibonay*. I asked them to play it. Will you dance with me?"

"Thank you," I said, watching for the nod from my escort, and I gave Billy the rest of the hot-dog sandwich to hold till I got back. It was a beautiful evening, and the fact that I was several inches taller than my rhumba partner did not matter.

"Senor Rodriguez," I said, "I shall never be unhappy again —I have so many nice things to remember."

At the end of the song, he led me to the ship's rail and said, "Senorita, this is a big day for me! I have something to show you that you will be very interested in." He reached

into his pocket and took out two sheets of white paper. "Look," he said, "my American citizenship papers. I got them today!"

"You know, I've changed a lot!" I said suddenly, and Jay and Chip looked up and laughed. "I guess I wouldn't look very well today doing a rhumba in gray taffeta."

"You?" Jay said, shocked— "—in gray taffeta? Today or any day! Never gray with your eyes."

"Pink! My dear," Chip teased, "you must try pink with purple speckles!"

I backed away from them and went to another wall along the terrace. I wasn't in the mood for their jests.

"As far away and as dark as September," I thought over again as I looked at the lake from my new position.

There was no doubt but that I had changed a great deal in six months—so much, in fact, that it frightened me a little to think about it now. I was so different that I seemed unreal —too much like the people in stories. I was like an old man about to die—reflecting on his whole life—and then suddenly dunked in a fountain-of-youth, emerging with a whole life to live still before him.

As much as I abhor sentimentality and dramatics, I could not rid myself of the fact that I had been given two whole lives to live—pre-polio and post-polio! On at least a dozen different occasions I had been referred to by the doctors as a "miracle," and however doubting I was, or however much I tried to convince myself that it was just artificial flattery, I still found myself believing it a little. Besides, there were a few concrete facts that I could not overlook.

Late in December, I had been examined by one of the foremost physio-therapists in the United States. She had trained under Sister Kenny for a number of years and was at one time chief technician at the Warm Springs Foundation for infantile paralysis. Her examination showed that there was no question

but that my left leg was almost entirely negative, and a brace would be almost an inevitable necessity. Even in January, when the conclave of doctors had considered my condition, one brace, and possibly two, were thought to be necessary. But aside from that, although polio had almost won a heavy bout with my throat, I could eat well and speak distinctly.

Now it was March, and I was walking without braces, and getting stronger. Everyone said that I was just lucky—I knew that I was—but I also knew that it was much more than just being lucky. I knew it, even though I was positive that I would never be able to say so in a spoken conversation, because it was simply too personal.

I think it began negatively. It began on the third day that I was ill. After a horror-filled five minutes when I was about to drown and discovered that no matter how I tried, I could not breathe, and I could not swallow. I was frightened to the core and then when I calmed down I discovered that I was half-way through the twenty-third Psalm. I didn't even know that I had remembered it. When I discovered what I had been saying, I was a little embarrassed, and I wondered if any of the nurses had heard me. After they had all left, I lay there with my emotions churning inside of me. I did not like being ill, and I did not care to face the millions of problems it presented. I hated to be called a brave little girl with all my heart and I cringed and boiled a little at "you've-got-to-fight" words.

I recalled how I had looked up at a vase of flowers standing on a table at the other end of the room, and a very strange feeling passed through me. The flowers were pale mauve gladioli and they stood very straight and very tall in a shiny black vase. The picture was beautiful, but somehow it was a little too perfect, and that spoiled the whole thing for it turned the picture into silly arrogance.

"Silly Arrogance" I thought, and then I remembered that

the word-combination had come to my mind for to me it was the worst possible insult, and I realized that I saw the flowers as silly arrogant objects, because of the person who had sent them to me. I remembered her very carefully as I looked at her flowers and I realized what an impression she had made on my life. She was a very haughty woman who ruled with pretty tears, fine manners, and insatiable arrogance. She was so unbelievably vulgar in her cruelty and so open about her self-centeredness that she was a perfect caricature of herself, and she fascinated me. I thought of her often—I always had —for she was the one person in the world that I had met whom I would want to be nothing like. And all of a sudden I remembered how I had felt just a few minutes before. I was cruel and ugly and unwilling to yield to anything which would help me—and I got a very strange feeling as I wondered if that might not be called silly arrogance too.

After I had thought of that, I could not bear the flowers, so I had the nurse take them out of the room. I mentally tossed my head and said to myself, "Forget all this philosophical nonsense and get well!"

I was unbendable brass! I had belonged to a generation of laughers. My "crowd" was gay and alert. We liked everything new, and if it wasn't new enough, we would invent something that was! I liked to move about all the time. I was thrilled with tennis and volley ball and swimming—and I adored dancing. I had made a hobby of the Russian Ballet ever since I had written an eighth grade term-paper about it. I had secretly been vain about my grace and I loved to remember the man who tried to persuade me to become a part of his adagio team. I had always wanted to be a dancer, but not that kind. The fact that my parents did not approve of dancing as a career did not keep it from being a secret ambition.

Good health was the most important thing in the world, and we even unconsciously scoffed at people with too-frequent

sniffles. I remembered how incredulous I was when I had heard that the girl who sat in front of me at the office had had a nervous breakdown. But on the summer before polio, I found that I was wearing down emotionally. I had a lot of wishes that were not ungranted, but merely postponed again and again. I was becoming irritable and impatient, when suddenly a chance to become a radio-writer appeared before me —and in the same mail, the orange-blossom proposal from Pelleas. Life was suddenly all peaches and cream when out of nowhere, polio lifted an ugly black fist and smacked me down.

The fact that I had staggered to my feet and stood there tottering, groggily viewing my future, was not strange. I had been used to throwing myself whole-heartedly into the game at hand, and it was inevitable that I should treat polio otherwise. It would pass, I assumed, leaving everything as it was before.

But suddenly I woke up one morning, and found that I could not stand. I had had polio, and polio was as simple as that. I was like a very young child who had been dropped into a big, black hole, and the only thing I was certain of was that I could not get out unless someone helped me. The education, the lectures, and the parental training which I had received for twenty-four years didn't seem to make me the person who could do anything for me now. I was like everyone else—normal, quarrelsome, gay, full of plans, and all of a sudden something happened! Something happened and I became a stranger. I was a greater stranger to myself than to anyone. Even my dreams did not know me. They did not know what they ought to let me do—and when I went to dances or to parties in them, there was always an odd provision or limitation—not spoken of or mentioned, but there just the same. I suddenly had the very confusing mental and emotional conflict of a lady leading a double life. It was unreal and it puzzled me, and I could not help dwelling on it.

Where were all those thoughts that I had been storing away for a rainy day. I never expected the storm, but now it was here all right.

When I was in the sixth grade, the spring-term project for the Civics and Vocations class, was a notebook called: "What Makes a Woman" (or a man). The notebook was one of those fascinating blank scrap-books that could be filled with anything we thought appropriate. I divided mine into eight chapters. They were: Health; Education; Patriotism; Godliness; Honesty; Loyalty and Truthfulness; Self-control; and Courage. As far as I was concerned, it was the swellest project we had had all year, and I bought the biggest scrap-book the five-and-ten sold for twenty-five cents. I crammed every available space with pictures from Mother's magazines and my Sunday-school paper. I copied dozens of poems and quotations from Bartlett's and a lot of the Psalms. During the recess period, just before it was time to hand the project in, I stayed at my desk to paste in the last envelope full of clippings that I had brought to school with me that morning.

I was perspiring and hard at work, squeezing them in sideways, because all the best spaces were long-gone, when I noticed my teacher standing at my elbow. I smiled up at her —tired, and a little weary of my subject—but very happy. I was going to have the best notebook in the class! But she didn't smile back, instead she said:

"My goodness, Noreen, don't you think you have got enough stuff there already? You are over-zealous—you act as if you didn't know that you were going to skip 6-a anyway. Now go outside and play some basketball."

I didn't know that I was going to skip 6-a, but it didn't matter—the surpise and the notebook were all ruined. The notebook became hateful, and I despised even touching it to pass forward to hand in. When it was returned, graded, the S sat red and mocking on its cover. It was meaningless,

because I knew that my teacher had not read it. On my way home from school, I went into an alley and dropped it into someone's garbage can. It was all ruined—and only because I had left out one chapter—confidence!

Confidence, I discovered quite a few too many years later, but I did discover it! And when I was in the hospital, I learned that confidence was translated to another great word—and that word was faith.

On a day, back in that far-away September when I first discovered that I had polio, a doctor came in to examine Lenore and me. He did not smile, and before he left he said to both of us: "Shut off your minds, and open up your Bibles!"

I shuddered a little at this open mention of the Bible. I simply could not do it. My "crowd" had had a name for people who spoke openly of the Bible or who read the Book in public conveyances. We called them "frogs," "turkeys," or just plain exhibitionists! Certainly none of us was an atheist or a heathen—we were all Sunday-school and church educated, but God and the Bible was just one of those things you never talked about—unless it was in a debate about Catholics or Jews.

I had always faithfully kept my appointments with God, but I kept them as nonchalantly and as inconspicuously as possible. I kept my steps straight and my life uncluttered and clean not for any spiritual reasons, but because common-sense showed that there was only one way to live. I had no doubt about the existence of God and I prayed to him nightly—thanking and asking—thanking and asking. And now that I was in the hospital, I went on as I always had—but I could not go beyond that; I just simply couldn't—I was religiously muscle-bound.

The day I discovered that I, of all people, could not walk, an old man for whom I had once worked telephoned me.

When I told him about my polio, he said, "Dusty, you have got to pray like you have never prayed before!"

I was taken aback. He was a tough old advertising egg. I had not expected that from him! All over, people seemed to be digging their own God out of the mothballs and dusting him off for me!

"I'm surprised to hear you say that," I said truthfully. "But I really don't think I can pray that way. It even makes me uncomfortable to talk about it now. Asking to walk is so great a favor, that I guess I don't deserve it. If I did, it never would have been taken away."

"Well," he said, "you are supposed to be a big girl now, and you are just a silly baby. God has selected one you from a lot of inconsequential you's—He is interested in you, and He wants you closer to Him. He is letting you in on one of the greatest thrills in the world and you are hesitating! If you don't believe it now, just start to pray for something very small—just one favor—and pray just as hard as you can. If it works, try something else. It it doesn't work, than you'll know you aren't trying hard enough. And you won't feel it when He hits you—no indeed! Try it!"

"Try it," he said, and being a good advertising man, he put it in words that I could not resist. So I fretfully tried it!

I knew that I didn't have the courage to pray to walk, so I prayed to be able to eat. People all over the world were praying for food, and I prayed to be able to eat just a little of all that I had before me. Then one day, I swallowed the grape jello, and I was like someone who had taken a no-doze pill and saw the same ghost three nights in succession. I wondered just a little if my praying had something to do with it!

I found one or two other occasions to use the twenty-third Psalm—and then little by little the "life is what you make it," "look for the silver lining," "we're pulling for you and thinking of you," and all the other little pleasantries decorated with

butterflies and pink roses and blue birds that came through my daily mail, began to penetrate my hard shell. They were all remarkable words of wisdom that I seemed to be seeing for the first time. They all had a meaning that I never knew existed. There were actually thousands of these words, but there wasn't a single one too many. Each plug was like a new brick added to a crumbling wall and I began to study each meaningful verse and each sagacious phrase.

My mother brought me my old summer-school Bible and listed passages she wanted me to read. She didn't make an issue of it, but she would say things like:

"When you have nothing to do, dear, read the twenty-third chapter of Job. You'll love the way it is written."

Gradually I didn't mind if I was caught reading the Bible, and I found that some of the nurses whom I feared would chide me, were imbibers themselves—and, strangely enough, they seemed to be the best nurses.

When I had the Bible to think about, I found it actually physically and mentally cool and soothing, and it became my dearest friend, for it answered the very fear I had at the very moment I had it. My favorite passages became Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to them that love God"; and Ephesians 5:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God."

Believing those two phrases was a stupendous job, and it meant saying them dozens on dozens of times before I could believe them. It meant actually saying, "Thank you God for this great experience of not being able to walk." The first hundred times or so that I said it, it hurt terribly. Sometimes it sounded so ridiculous and childish to me, that I had to let it go. But I went back to it again, and I stuck to it almost more out of curiosity and determination than anything else. And then I began to understand it!

Very logically believing in God so much so that you can

make Him help you is probably the most personal experience in the world, and no words could make it clear.

Very logically believing in God and thanking God keeps you busy and when you are busy, your morale doesn't have a chance to drop. Saying thank you for something often enough, is inevitably going to have you believing that this thing is actually worth thanking for. That's the first result. If you should accidentally see a doctor frown a little after he examines you, it gives you an alternative to dwell on—that's another result. Then soon, you begin to see how much better off you are than a great many others around you—another result! Each little improvement you make is a kind of answer to something you have asked for—and before you know it, you are past the worst. You are coming out of this thing just fine!—and all the time you have been so busy, you haven't had time to cry or to worry about next year.

One time one of my roommates was having a very hard time, and the doctor beside her bed said to her, "My dear, we are trying to help you all we can. We have done everything that we know will help you, but now it's up to you! You have got to fight!"

He had said, "You have got to fight," and I realized that what I had always thought correct was untrue. I thought medicine did nine-tenths of the fighting, and the patient the other one-tenth. It is exactly the opposite. Medicine does only one-tenth—a very important one-tenth—but nine-tenths of the fighting is strictly personal, and the easiest way in the world to fight the hardest is by just lying still and saying, "Thank you." It is much more simple than beating the wall with your fists or screaming out torrents of meaningless words. You get the greatest possible results by expending the least possible energy—and that is logic again!

"How can I believe you?" my roommate shouted to the doctor that day. "How can I fight?"

That was when I remembered the sixth grade notebook—and that was when I knew that the ninth chapter was to be called "Faith." I was determined to be the woman of nine chapters that I had planned to be a long time ago, and I tried very hard. It was a new outlook. I didn't feel as if I had been dipped in the waters of Jordan and come out a haloed creature crying, "Oh Lord, I'm saved!" It was simply a new attitude that made me stronger and happier—it kept me busy and the craziest thing of all was that it seemed to be making me healthy!

This new outlook was changing me so, that when I looked back upon how much differently I regarded things now, I became confused. Whatever it was, I was not sure, but I wanted to know how I really looked at this business mentally.

One day when some of the hospital staff was in my room, I said that I wished that I could be hypnotized to see whether my paralysis was just mental. The results I was getting were so surprising to me, that I thought perhaps I wasn't medically ill after all, but was just unconsciously suffering from one of those fashionable mental upsets. When they laughed at my idea, I settled back swearing "Medieval blockheads!" under my breath.

Soon after that, I asked my physio-therapist whether they could be positive that I had polio.

"Why, Noreen," she said, "never was there a more typical bulbar. Put away your psychology books—this is up to you and me!"

And Somebody Else, I thought confusedly.

My learning that in order to be helped, I had to believe beforehand that I *would* be helped, was not a spontaneous revelation. It had taken me all of the six months to learn this new attitude, and I knew it would take me the rest of my life to understand it. All I knew was that God was a delicate,

discreet trainer who could make me the toughest fighter in the world. I didn't know how He did it, but in the days when I had first begun to stand, and found it an unbelievably horrible task, something made me keep trying a little harder than I could have tried if I were just doing it alone. In a copy of Fortune that I saved from the summer before, I read the story of electronics done pictorially for the layman. Electronics was a simple word with seven-hundred and fifty outlets plus a secret list for military purposes. At last religion became reasonable to me. It was just a phase of higher education which had not been clearly exposed to me until I became ill.

A vacuum filament—a plate—a metal grid—a cathode, an anode exposed to a particular kind of pressure, and out flowed beautiful rays of sound—of music, of voice—of vital military information—information that would perpetuate man. It was simply electronics, a man-made tube.

I, a human being, God-made, with more complex construction than the most intricate electronics tube, was questioning the power of rays which radiated when a new kind of pressure was put on me. It was a satisfying comparison!

It was still dark outside when I awoke one morning. I slowly opened my eyes, and thought I smelled incense. Suddenly I noticed the wavery shadow of our flower-vase on the wall next to my bed. I sat bolt upright, and looked at my roommate. There was a tall taper burning next to her bed and a priest was waving his hand slowly over her head. Eva was lying very still, with her eyes closed, and there was a gray smudge on her forehead. I lay down on my stomach, covered my head with my blankets and began to cry. It was awful, awful! Dearest Eva! But suddenly I heard a noise and I looked up. The priest was gathering up some vessels and assembling them in a little black bag, and Eva was smiling very sweetly.

"Thank you, Father," she said.

I was sitting up in bed again.

She looked over at me and said, "What's the matter with you, you look wild!"

"Nothing," I said, "I'm going back to sleep. I forgot that it was Good Friday."

One day when Jack and Jay and I were sitting in our wheel chairs, Jay began to complain a little. I was very surprised, since he was always the little ray of sunshine, the somebody who always found a happy reason for everything. His morale never seemed to dip even a little and I admired his perfect composure and the way he accepted polio, as something inevitable but not too unbearable.

"Honestly," he said, "I think I would rather have a wooden leg than one which won't move. Really it is wonderful what they can do with artificial limbs."

"Jay!" I gasped.

"You know what!" Jack screamed with his usual subtlety —his face crossed in a terrible frown, "you are absolutely crazy—not only that—you are pretty much insane! You moved that leg a little last week, didn't you—so! You'll move it next week, no? You got two legs and you're supposed to keep 'em—see—or you wouldn't have 'em. My mother says that God takes care of everybody all the time and you're just supposed to relax and let him take care of you!" And he jabbed an unlit cigarette into his mouth. The door prevented him from rolling out of the room like a streak of lightning. He called it a dirty name.

Jay and I looked at each other. We were a little breathless —we didn't know that Jack believed in a Deity.

"I feel a little silly," Jay said.

"I do too," I said, "I never could have told you that."

I knew that I wasn't the only person who had come closer

to God just because I had encountered a difficult hill. I was very glad that I could see beyond the peaks my religion had hit before, and that the fact that I had never called upon God to help me in some big task before I was ill did not discourage me from doing it now.

Thousands of people stop with the statement, "If you're good to your fellow men, if you don't cheat or steal, it doesn't matter whether you go to church or pray regularly to God." That is a good statement, but when you need extra power, that kind of thinking will stop you, because it doesn't go far enough. It misses the big point, the one my old boss sold me on, that the reason something has happened to you is that God wants to show you a broader, bigger, richer life—and not only does it make you believe that, it proves it!

The war has made God a kind of popular figure again, but His prominence will wane and the stories of His power fade into literary deletions as we settle down into peacetime comforts. Perhaps it is too bad that so magnificent an experience as learning the power of God can only follow most tellingly in the path of sorrow and darkness. But then again, it may be that those who never encounter sorrow or darkness do not deserve to find that power.

One of the tray-girls, a painful figure with misshapen flat feet and ill-fitting teeth was very interested in helping me. She was a Catholic and frequently she put novena notes or Saints' medals on my trays. I read them with interest, but of course I really did not understand them.

One day when she came in, she said,

"Have you been praying to Saint Christopher?"

"No, Wilma," I said. "You see, I'm not a Catholic."

"Oh, that's all right," Wilma said. "I'm sure Saint Christopher won't mind."

CHAPTER XI

Last Times Tonight

WE HAD shrimp a la Newburg just once too often! We had it for Saturday's supper, its third showing that week. It left us all quite distempered, and gnawingly hungry. Even before visiting hours, Chip and I had emptied the kitchen refrigerator of several dishes of custard, some very gum-droppy red jello, and a small brick of cream cheese. Eva and I who usually had a reserve supply of bacon, crackers and cheese or canned sardines, were out of everything too.

I hurriedly telephoned to my parents and asked them to bring some hot-dogs for us when they came to visit that evening. They brought eleven of them, and when all the visitors left, Chip and I took them to Pearl in the kitchen. She fried them for us on a quantity of very white oleomargerine. Eva, Jay, Chip and I each ate two of them, and there were three left.

"Let's divide them," Chip said, grinning broadly as he put two of them on the last slice of bread.

We all felt much more cheerful, since we also had some root beer and a small pitcher of tomato juice.

The next morning when the nurse came to awaken us, she said, "Chip is very ill. He is going to be operated on today.

What did you people have to eat at your party last night?"

Eva and I looked at each other, and for the next week or so, we stayed quite close to the standard hospital diet—doting mostly on egg-dishes, baked potatoes and custards.

People were still asking, "When will you be leaving the hospital?"—or "When will you be completely well?" Those had been the favorite questions for more than six months, and we had all become so accustomed to them, that sometimes we just shrugged our shoulders and didn't answer audibly at all. Sometimes we would explain that we had had polio, and that getting well took a long time.

"But my goodness," some would say, "you have been here almost seven months—don't you think you would get stronger much faster if you went home and started to do some of the things you did before you came to the hospital?"

"Here everything we do is done under careful supervision. We are far from strong and we are introduced to our old lives slowly and cautiously. Our weaknesses are decreased by slow, methodical increases in our exercises. We do enough to make us stronger than we were yesterday, but not too much, so that we won't be weaker than we were. Besides noise and confusion are at a minimum in a hospital—that all helps to keep us getting stronger too."

"But," they would say, "you mean that every day for almost seven months, you have been getting exactly the same physio-therapy exercises? You mean the physio-therapist for seven months straight has been saying 'Think here' as she moved your muscles through their normal motions—still in the same soft, voice—still one patient at a time?"

"Oh, yes," we would answer enthusiastically. "The same physio-therapist doing the very same things—and her patients trying very hard every day. That is where the six-dozen patience pills are consumed!"

"But will you be all right?" some would ask bluntly. "Will you limp, or will you have to wear one of those awful, horrible braces?"

"Braces are very wonderful inanimate objects," I would say. "Some of them are beautifully chromium plated, with soft, smooth leather straps."

"Oh, don't be so gruesome," one woman said to me.

Would we limp? We didn't know, and I don't think any of us thought to ask. We asked questions like, "Will we be able to swim?" "Think we can climb a train step?" "How many plays or concerts can we see now that we'll have to buy the main-floor seats?" We didn't ask about ballet dancing or basketball—we didn't even think about that.

One day one of mother's friends telephoned to inquire about me.

"How is she?" he asked.

"Why she is just fine," Mother said. "She is getting stronger, and we think she will be coming home soon."

"Yes," he insisted, "but how *is* she. I mean is she really all right?"

"Why, of course," Mother said. "She will be just fine!"

"You don't understand me," he urged. "I mean, well, has she slipped a little? Does she think clearly? Does she remember everything?"

"Oh!" my Mother said, and when she recovered, "Oh no—she has dreams! And she doesn't remember everything either, she can't remember where she put her red printed scarf that she wore last summer!"

Shortly before I came home, a strange woman came to call on Mother. She was dressed all in black, and she wore a small black hat on her gray top-knot.

"Your daughter has infantile paralysis," she said. "I read it in the newspaper."

"Why, yes," Mother said.

"You must wrap her up entirely in fresh, green cabbage leaves and put her into a tub full of very hot water. While she's in the tub you must put on a black and red dress and burn a turkey feather."

"Oh," Mother said, "We call those 'mock squabs', only we use hamburger!"

And she shut the door quickly and leaned against it.

But here it was—already April, and once or twice while I was looking yearningly out of the window, I had seen internes and laboratory technicians holding hands, as they walked outside during a balmy, sunny lunch hour. The Mirror had already carried one or two engagement announcements. Jay received a large box-full of pussy-willows which he divided with me. I put them in a tall white vase with a little water, and they got so big overnight that you could almost hear them pop as their furry-gray faces came out of their little brown shells. The fruitman on the corner had added daffodils to his cart, and Eva got a big box of spring flowers in lavender, white and yellow assortments. Flowers taken out of the patients' rooms for the night were no longer cyclamen or roses, but tulips and hyacinths and a few early hydrangeas. Convertibles began to take their tops down, and nurses began to run from building to building without their coats.

Spring was definitely in the air, and when I awoke one morning, Eva, who usually slept until the very last minute, was already awake and blinking incredulously.

She said, "Do you hear a bird?"

"There isn't a tree around," I insisted, but when I shuffled to the window in my speckled pink-flannel pyjamas, there was a little tree! It came almost to the elbow of the tall bronze Michael Reese statute, and when we listened very

closely, we distinctly heard the sweet, thin notes of an invisible little bird.

We had fresh pineapple for breakfast, and we kept our window opened all that day until late in the afternoon.

Early that evening Jay rolled out of his room into the hallway, where I had been waiting for him. There were lines of consternation framing his eyes.

"What is it?" I said.

"Mother," he answered, throwing up his arms. "Mother is the sweetheart of them all!" And he looked angry.

"Why, Jay," I said, "What is it?"

"A window display—size 18 x 30 or something. For Mother's Day. I've got to have it sketched by tomorrow morning, and I don't have a single idea!"

"Oh, that's easy," I said. "A service flag made of red and white carnations with a blue star in the middle—or (and I bit my lip) maybe even a gold star."

"Well, I'll be darned," he said. "That's a swell idea. A service flag of carnations—nothing could be easier to make up. Look for it in the Mother's Day windows. It's too bad you're going home tomorrow. I guess this idea marks the finale of our polio display work, unless you'd like to form a company of 'Idea Unlimited' or something."

"Inspiration Incorporated," I laughed.

"Are you going to be happy to be at home again?"

"Isn't it funny," I said, "I've just been wondering whether I will be. Here I am so much better than a great many people I see; there, I will be not quite as well as everyone else."

"Well," he laughed, "at least you won't have any trouble with service. Your meals will be perfect and I imagine everyone will wait on you hand and foot."

"You are absolutely wrong. My Mother is a great believer in initiative—there will be no pampering, I assure you. There

never was—even when I had chickenpox and mumps at the same time. Anyway," I frowned, "why should anyone have to wait on me?"

"They will, just wait, you'll see. When I go home for week-ends, no one will let me do a thing until I throw a fit. People out there feel sorry for us."

"They do?" I said slyly. "Maybe we can turn that into something profitable.

"You're laughing now," he said seriously, "but just wait till you see how traffic will stop to look at you, and when you get into a taxi and can't get out, it won't seem very funny."

"I intend to start to drive right away," I said independently. "Maybe that will help whatever complex I might develop. Besides, I intend to keep pretty busy. I'm going to see a lot of people, and get used to having them watch me while I walk in front of them on my crutches. I've been practicing a flippant toss of my head to use when someone says 'tsk tsk' or gets tears in her eyes. And if anyone asks me one question about polio, I'm going to say I just don't feel like talking about it any more."

"But people will still feel sorry for you," he insisted. "They'll think that while other young ladies are marrying soldiers and having babies, that you are missing it all. They'll think, 'That poor child has had so much unhappiness—and now she is facing the rest of her life a cripple.' They'll think it, you know they will. They're thinking things like that about me too. 'Look at the 4-F,' they'll say, "and I'll want to punch every one of their damn noses. They think because you've lost a certain, silly bounce in your step, you've lost your life —and from now on all you can do is just make the best of it!"

"But, Jay," I insisted, "do you think their opinions are going to matter to us?"

"Yes," he said. "You know that every once in while we'll

hear a comment that we weren't supposed to hear. We'll feel that those new friends we make will like us because they feel sorry for us, and they want to help us."

"Well, maybe," I said, "maybe if we know what people are going to think, we ought to start getting used to it, and go on from there. Since we can't make other people adjust themselves to us, we are going to have to adjust ourselves to them. Some people think that homes and children are the whole world, and that if you don't have them when they think you are supposed to, that you are just a poor unfortunate compensating with something else. That isn't true, Jay, is it? Certainly you could have had them long ago if it was, and so could I. Some people just have other things they want to do too. Maybe it's silly, because it is a much harder way."

"Maybe it's like polio," he laughed. "Maybe the hard way is the best way."

"Well anyway," I sighed, "at least we won't have to worry about our children facing this kind of problem. Parents are supposed to transmute polio-immunity, you know."

"Maybe we couldn't solve this so easily if we couldn't walk at all," Jay said.

"I wonder," I said. "I wonder if like Jack said, if we would just relax and let God take care of us—realizing that whatever happened was inevitable—if we wouldn't find some new channels that we didn't know existed. I could still write and you could still sketch, even if we couldn't walk! Maybe we could do it better, if it was all we could do."

"But what if we lost the use of our arms?"

"Then we would find a new part of our minds, I guess. If we weren't supposed to be alive, we wouldn't be."

"That is strictly a dark-age attitude—that is pure and simple fatalism, and it doesn't face the issue, it slides past it comfortably. Some people are born healthy, and some are

born cripples. Each leads a different kind of life—all the years of it are spent in adjusting him to his kind of life. When you are healthy all your life, and suddenly in the best years of it, you slip into the other kind—you are naturally unhappy. You are out of your element, a fish out of water. You find yourself where you do not belong. You remember how the other half lives, but you can't live with it. You won't concede your former position—you won't even turn your head to see how comfortable the new category might be. You liked the old places, and there you want to stay—there you don't belong anymore, but there you want to stay—so you do—miserably!"

"Maybe that is the male attitude," I said, "but women are equipped to handle the situation differently. When you once belong to a group, you always belong. You belong to it because of a lot of reasons you have nothing to do with—race, religion, position, education, inherited traits and talents. Those things are not physical, but they make you belong someplace. Sometimes these uncontrollable factors combine and people of unlike religions or talents make up a group—but somewhere there is a common, compatible factor. Just because you can't hop off a chair or go running down some stairs doesn't mean that you belong to a different group—the common factors are never that shallow.

"Besides, when a woman's nose is ugly, she doesn't look through a magazine and say 'There are 1,935 women in this magazine who have perfect, beautiful noses, and mine is ugly'—and then go away like a hermit. She concentrates on making her mouth irresistible and her coiffure very becoming so that you never think to look at her ugly nose. After a while, when no one else seems to notice her nose, she forgets about it too, and the minute she forgets about it, it stops being a problem. Then she can wear her hair any way she chooses, and go without lipstick completely, and no one will think her

less pretty. If she cannot dance, maybe she can sing. Fatalism has given me an alternative—your conception of disaster has not. I think that makes the score: Northwestern, one; Yale, nothing!"

"Say, what are you two talking about?" Charley, our favorite orderly said, as he came over. "You look as if you had been invited to sit at the peace table."

"Noreen is trying to tell me that she has an irresistible mouth," Jay clowned.

"I'm going home tomorrow, Charley, and Jay thinks I won't like it out there in the hard cruel world."

"Jay is a pedagogue," Charley laughed, clipping the word off as if it were spelled with "Ts."—And then swinging out his left arm, and watching the wave of nothing it left behind, he quoted from Walt Whitman.

"That is from *A Song for Occupations!*" he said when he finished, "and it tells in much more beautiful words that I'm an orderly because I'm a happy orderly."

Jay and I watched Charley all the while he talked, for his gestures and his poetic delivery were things of fascination. He was like a favorite radio-show that only lasted for fifteen minutes, or he was like previews of coming attractions—whatever he was quoting ended too soon.

"I learned that sitting down," he said. "Why does Jay think you're going to be afraid of the big, bad world? Haven't you learned a damn thing here in eight months?"

I looked at him weakly—not quite sure. "I think," I said falteringly, "that the most important thing in the world is to be happy. I think I'm going to work harder at keeping happy than keeping a job."

"Ah," he said, bowing, "the lady has recovered completely!" Then he said, "Happy!—that give me a hunch for the third at Agua Caliente. Excuse me while I telephone a

man about a book. Oh," he said, "that crazy little Sammy almost strangled his nurse this morning. I told them if they gave him one more Bambi to stuff, something would happen. A psychiatrist is going to test him this afternoon. Mark my words, he'll wind up at Dunning sooner than they expect. He's crazier than a bed bug—he isn't sick—he just doesn't want to go home. Well—maybe that doesn't prove he's crazy, eh? Maybe he hasn't got a hundred pretty nurses at home!"

When Charley left, Jay and I fell into a kind of reverie. He pretended that he had returned to his reading, but I could see that only his eyes saw the words, just as my eyes saw only the outline of the photographs in my magazine.

When you are stationary for a long time, even physical things lose their familiar shapes and look different. The wall that I saw from my bed, which looked like a Spanish Villa, I associated with tortillas and caballeros and strong red poinsettias. The pink and blue morning sky often looked Puerto Rican, and I thought that if I walked over to the window, I could see the bay and the blue Caribbean, and soft, dark palm trees stretching and yawning at the beginning of another day.

But when my bed was moved to another position, what appeared to be the plastered wall of the Villa, was the old red brick wall of the Keeley Beer Company, and the illusion was completely destroyed for now I had full view of the red neon sign that went on at eight, and off at one. I would spend the rest of my life looking for nice things to remember, I decided, should I come face to face with another ugly brick wall.

I had had my moments, and what I thought was fun while I was doing it, was even more fun to remember. Once I ran very fast down Seventh Avenue in New York—just because I felt like running, and no one else was. I was wearing a mink coat, and high-heeled shoes and a brown hat with a high perch of feathers.

What had happened to us was new and different. We weren't any more ready for it than a soldier shot in the back. But if we were to be remembered or believed about anything, I knew we would rather have people know that never once in all those days did we say, "Why did this have to happen to ME?" It just did, and we accepted it as a new adventure. Jay and I called it our semester spent at a training school for a new outlook! Progressive education, you know. There are more ways than one to cook a goose. Hop-Scotch is a kids' game—I had already done that—this was something new!

And when I got far enough away from this training school, I thought, I would toss myself out into things like that smoke dancing out of the chimney across the street. I would be kind and unselfish and just as happy as I knew how, for no one had any longer to live than I. No more of that dropping-into-life-like-something-going-through-an-electric-wringer-with-no-one-to-catch-it-when-it-comes-out-feeling. No more conscience-stricken hours wasted with worry—if I did worry, I'd at least do it with a clear conscience. Right then I decided to drop my grudge against Vogue Magazine, because they stole the words right out of my mind, and called one of their color creations, "Tickled Pink". And no more silly sulking like the time I was thoroughly engrossed in an enjoyable book, when suddenly I came upon a phrase that I thought I had coined. In a fit of passion, I tossed the book with all my might against the facing wall.

I resolved to stop blushing when I saw the married man I dreamed I kissed. With visions of sugar plums, I'd dance through life in red satin slippers and false eyelashes if I felt like it. And the devil with ancestors and heirlooms—I would marry for chemistry!

Wasn't it funny, that life, the cheapest thing in the world, was the most precious?

"I've got my dreams all picked out," I said to myself, "but this time I'll give them several alternatives!"

But once there was a family horse named "High Trust." Expecting things, I guessed, was just an old family custom. "High Trust" won a few tough races himself.

"Excuse me, I have to prepare some refreshments for a birthday party," I said, finally ending my reverie.

April seventh was Pearl's birthday, and we thought it would be nice to remember the sweet evening-housekeeper of our floor, who had mothered us so well. Since I was leaving on the eighth, and Jay and Chip soon after, our group was about to dissolve. Pearl had been so generous and kind to us all those months, that we decided to pool our finances and buy her a small gift to remember us by.

The pool was a problem. Since there was little we could spend money on, we seldom had any. At final count, we discovered that if we all skipped the morning newspaper, we would have seventy-two cents to spend for a gift.

I swallowed my pride, and with the seventy-two cents in hand, I went up to the occupational therapy department to volunteer the money and my services for the Patient Occupation Plan, 606-b, in exchange for a tea-apron for Pearl.

As much as I hated to admit it, the tea-apron was quite appealing, but my hemming finger was pricked like a sieve. My needle, accidently quite blunt on the wrong end, made the four yards around the ruffled edge and long, double-edged sash quite a hazard course, and here and there were traces of bloodshed on the white lawn battlefield.

Now while Lissa wrapped it as gift-like as possible, I sectioned some grapefruit and oranges and cubed some apples and one precious banana, and arranged it all artistically on six paper plates (so that Pearl would have no dishes to wash

that evening). We finished it off with small balls of cream cheese and some crackers. When it was all ready, we arrayed it nicely on the starched white spread of the Kenny bed, and invited Pearl to come in.

Pearl was very pleased, and I think she even cried a little. We listened to several more of Pearl's famous anecdotes, and then she had to leave to complete the rest of her evening's work. After all, we had almost forgotten that there were other patients in the hospital too.

After she departed, Chip left the room. He was up and around after his appendectomy, and although he looked a little wan, all his spirit was returning in full color. He came back, and I gasped at the picture he made in the doorway. His dandelion haircut had overgrown, for Mike, the hospital barber, didn't know how to handle it. It was standing at attention here and there, and he wore a big grin that had carelessly forgotten to hide the space where the "rheumatic tooth" had been. He held his shiny maple crutch cocked in a most gentlemanly manner, and in his outstretched right hand, was a four-foot long, foot wide, white flannel sock. All in all he looked like a take-off on the famous pose of the French gentleman in tailed-coat and morning trousers with his top hat in one hand, and the nosegay of roses in the other.

"Aloha," everyone shouted. "Aloha means goodbye!"

Just then the evening supervisor stuck her head in the doorway. "What's going on here?" she said, and Chip shoved the sock behind his back.

"We're having a party for Noreen," Lissa said. "She's leaving tomorrow."

"We'll miss you," she said nicely. "And all the best luck in the world."

"Thank you," I said smiling, and I remembered how nice she had been to me when I first came.

We closed the heavy room door, and Chip handed me the big, white sock.

"This is your memory-sock!" he said.

It was a familiar hospital accessory, for it was used on some patients when they went to the operating rooms. It was stamped with the 'MICHAEL REESE HOSPITAL—I-44' identification, and running the length of it in blue-ink letters was the saddest word in the English language—'Farewell'. The sock was tied together at the top with an artistic, floppy bow of cerise-colored taffeta, and a fancy tissue-paper rose stuck through the old 'DO NOT ENTER, PATIENT BEING TREATED' sign that hung from one end of the ribbon.

The old beige room with the encircling brown stripe looked suddenly like the perfect room for a party. It became warm and cozy, for there were good friends in it, and the friends were closer together for a little while, for they were about to part. It must have been a little like a submarine returning from a long and dangerous journey, with an intact crew that knew they were going to be divided when it docked.

Slowly I untied the taffeta ribbon and dumped out ten neatly wrapped, carefully tied little packages. Memory-sock indeed!

The first package contained the name tags taken from the foot of our beds—Lissa and Violet and Henrietta and Eva; Jay and Jack and Chip. The next package held a new wash cloth, labeled "There's Never any Laundry!" The third package contained a signed vitamin slip, my physio-therapy appointment card, and a complete muscle chart. The fourth, a bar of strong, yellow hospital soap, as perfumey as a lye factory. The sixth was a salt shaker with the familiar impregnable holes, and a pepper-shaker with big, clear perforations —this one was labeled "Food for Camouflage."

The seventh package was a little match box containing

thirty-five pieces of a bilious yellow chalk. On the top of the box was a label saying: "Gall-ing, isn't it!"

The eighth package was a little bag of Chinese checker marbles and one playing card. The ninth was called "Our Activity Envelope". One flap bore two bands from cigars to remind me of the men who had chatted and smoked and told stories in our alcove. Another bore a miniature ball of yarn, to remind me of my constructive moments. The edge of the facing flap had been burned to immortalize the wild night of the fire. The last flap was an absolute blank—for there were, after all, times when nothing happened.

And the last package—the one at the bottom of the heap, was the memory of them all—a small square of the heavy woolen blanket that was my Kenny pack, and three large, shiny safety pins.

Sometimes I just couldn't remember how old I was. I wanted to cry—and yet I had built up a firm barrier against tears. "Funny how we met," I said with a kind of gaiety, and I practiced that toss of my head that I had told Jay about earlier in the evening.

"Oh, the party's just begun," laughed Jay, and he held up two small frosty brown bottles of our neighbor Keeley's beer.

"How did you get those in here!" I gasped.

"We've got a basket and a pulley," Chip laughed "—out the pantry window."

"Courageous smugglers!" I said as I set out five glasses.

We talked until after midnight, and then we very carefully washed out the glasses and hid the beer bottles in my overnight bag.

"Goodnight," I said at the door, leaning on my crutches. "It was a lovely, lovely party, and the sweetest farewell I will ever have."

"Oh," said Jay, stopping Lissa, "did you tell her?"

"Now see," Lissa said, "after all that beer I almost forgot."

"Tell me what?" I asked curiously.

"That Count Vronsky is married!"

"No! I didn't think internes had time to get married!"

"He wasn't an interne, he was a very important resident-doctor."

"Not only that," Jay added, "our underground has gone further—he is not only a happy husband, but he is leaving for the Coast Guard."

"Now I know that it is time for me to go," I sighed.

When we turned out the lights to go to sleep, I said, "Eva, shall we plant one more garden tonight?"

"No," she said, "now you can plant a real one. It's almost time to start turning the ground over to let it breathe before it starts growing things. I think you'll have to wait until Fall to set out your tulip-tree. I always like to start my trees in the Fall to let them have a whole year in their ground so that they can get used to it before they start growing in it. I don't see why you want to bother with nasturtiums, though. They are so small and short and they close so easily. There's really nothing to a nasturtium, I even like moss-roses better than I do them. And don't expect big things from those hollyhock seeds, they won't blossom until next year. I think I'll send for some tulip and gladioli bulbs this year. If the war keeps up there won't be enough men to take care of culturing more of them—and I have two long borders at the edge of our terrace that I want to set out with gladioli and early tulips," and then she was very quiet.

"Eva," I said.

"Yes?" she said softly.

"Are you asleep?"

"No, Stinky," she said. "I just remembered that I can't plant a garden. I don't know when I'll be able to go home. Maybe it will be Fall, or maybe it will be another Spring."

"You can have a garden, Luther," I said. "You can have flower pots all over this damn room."

"I don't want flower pots," she said vehemently, "I want pine trees. I want big strong spruce that I and my three little children would have to hold hands to encircle."

"You'll have pine trees, Luther, and you'll have three little children to hold hands with too. You'll have them if you wish hard enough. And I'll help you wish every night, for the rest of my life."

"Why did this happen to me, though," she said quietly. "I didn't plan it that way."

"You're on the wrong track, Luther. You can't ever say that. You have to start at the very beginning and say, 'Thank you for making this happen to me!' " I said.

"But that doesn't make sense," she said. "And the only reason you can say that is because you are well and you are ready to go home. I wish I were you more than anything."

"Don't say that," I said. "Don't want to be anybody in the world but yourself. Please believe what I'm telling you. Please try to be happy and try saying 'Thank you' for being yourself. Anyway," I said, "maybe your dream gardens are more beautiful than your real ones could be."

"Aren't hospitals funny places," she said. "You meet all kinds of crazy people, and sometimes they even put you in the same room with them."

I liked to hear her laugh.

"Maybe we're not the average run of hospital patients," she said. "We are the kind of people who like to dance and wear pretty dresses and fall in love with strong, handsome men. We are the girls who don't wear hats when it rains, or

galoshes, because we're stronger than that. We never stuck our tongues out for a medical reason in all our lives."

"Once," I said, "someone told me I couldn't walk. It didn't matter, Eva, I had to keep happy, and when I did, it didn't matter that I couldn't walk."

"But you can walk now!" she said.

"I don't think it would have mattered. I had to learn that any one action is small and doesn't matter. Now nothing can hurt me or make me afraid. Even that I can't wear high heels," and I giggled.

"High-heels! See, you aren't satisfied!"

"Aspirations," I said, "are noble. I have always had them. Once I wanted to marry a Roosevelt I had read about!"

"I hope it rains tomorrow," she said sleepily. "Maybe that will make the forsythia early."

But it didn't rain. Easter Saturday was warm and exploding with sunshine. Everything looked as happy as I was to be going home—keeping my promise that this time I was going there walking!

EPILOGUE

Nothing But Sunshine

. . . . for *getting well is an inspiration!* And getting well is knowing that you are!

You can still be completely recovered if you use a couple of crutches and two or three braces, if you are not going to be one bit unhappier than you were before.

How do you know that life for you isn't going to be better and more friendly than it ever was. Give it a chance. Just because you have lived one way does not mean there are not others equally good—or even more fun!

Lenore is going to graduate from her old high school. Barbara is a wonderful children's nurse. Chrysanthemum is gay and full of living in a normal way of life. Violet writes beautiful words from her wheel chair. Bill is an engineer with a splendid future, and he drives his own automobile. Chip is a sophomore at the university. Jack is growing up well. Jay has organized his own business, and many of the magnificent displays you will see in store windows all over the country will be his dreams. Lissa is also at college. Henrietta's charm is still in blossom. Eva is gay. And I have a handsome husband and am writing a novel which I will call "Bricole" and finish in 2005. Who knows—perhaps it will win the Nobel Prize for literature.

616.83 L753M 70994